No. 86 MAY 2, 1914 5 CENTS

Nick Carter Stories

THE YELLOW COUPON
OR
NICK CARTER'S SHORTEST TRAIL

STREET AND SMITH PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

NICK CARTER STORIES

Issued Weekly. Entered as Second-class Matter at the New York Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 *Seventh Ave., New York.*

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No. 86. NEW YORK, May 2, 1914. **Price Five Cents.**

THE YELLOW COUPON;

Or, NICK CARTER'S SHORTEST TRAIL.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A STARTLING DISCLOSURE.

"Answer it, Joseph."

Nick Carter's remark was addressed to his butler. Nick was seated at dinner in his Madison Avenue residence, in company with Chick Carter and Patsy Garvan, his two most efficient assistants. He had heard the ringing of the telephone in his library.

Joseph bowed himself from the room. He returned in a few moments, saying:

"It is Mr. Philip Langham, sir. He——"

"Langham!"

Nick's brows knit quickly, while both Chick and Patsy looked up a bit concerned, as if the butler's announcement had some ominous significance.

"He said he would like to talk with you, Mr. Carter, and that his business is very important," said Joseph, concluding his interrupted message.

"Continue your dinner," said Nick, with a glance at his assistants, while he laid aside his napkin. "I will return presently."

"Can it be that the rats have made good?" Chick remarked, turning to Patsy after Nick had left the room.

"Give it up," said Patsy sententiously. "They may have set their teeth."

"Such a phone call from Phil Langham is decidedly suggestive."

"All of that, Chick, in view of the threats made by Rita Carvalli. She's a she-devil, for fair, and her venom is something to be feared."

"It's deadly, all right."

"She still continues to believe that Langham shot and killed her brother, Tomaso Carvalli, and she has sworn she'll stick out for vengeance until blood has been repaid with blood."

"An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth—that's the creed of Rita Carvalli."

"You bet! It's born in her blood, and bred in her bone."

"True," said Chick. "She ought to know, however, that Langham did not commit that crime, or the district attorney would not have wiped out the charge against him. You heard enough on the night we rounded up Gid Preston and the Tony Garcia gang, Rita Carvalli along with them, to have convinced her of that."

"Rats!" said Patsy. "She's clannish, and has more faith in Garcia and his bunch of dagos than in any assertion I could make. It might have been all right, and no doubt we could have fixed the murder on Tony Garcia, if we could have got him before a court and jury. That was knocked on the head by the miraculous escape of the two worst men in the bunch—Preston and Tony Garcia himself."

"True again—deplorably true," said Chick.

"It beats the devil that we should have turned them over to the police, after having got them well in hand," grumbled Patsy. "They never would have slipped through our fingers, smash-up or no smash-up. One of us would have hung on to those two rascals—the only two whom we had any case against as principals."

"The complicity of the others cuts no great ice, Patsy, unless Garcia could be tried and convicted," said Chick. "What could be done, then, but let the scamps go."

"Nothing, of course," replied Patsy. "But the end is not yet. We'll land them again sooner or later, both Garcia and Gid Preston, when I'll wager we make good in court. They've been lying mighty low, nevertheless, since that night in Forsyth Street."

It was precisely five weeks since the eventful night to which Patsy referred—that on which Gideon Preston, manager of the fashionable Orville House, had been

rounded up by the Carters for having repeatedly robbed the rooms of his wealthy patrons by entering them in the disguise of an unknown guest, after having registered and obtained convenient apartments under a fictitious name, causing the police to vainly search for a mythical fugitive who completely vanished after the crime was committed.

It was five weeks since he had been caught in the act by John Darcy, the house detective, resulting in the murder of the latter, and the subsequent discovery in Preston's apartments of the fruits of his latest robbery, together with evidence enough to have convicted him, and showing that his personal bankrupt condition was the probable occasion for his crime. It had required the acumen and energetic efforts of Nick Carter and his assistants to ferret out the truth, and round him up in a house in Forsyth Street, as Patsy had observed, whither he had been forced to go by the threats of his discarded mistress, Rita Carvalli, who had seen him commit the murder.

It was a master stroke, the arrest of Preston and the notorious gang headed by Tony Garcia, a former lover of Rita, and who now was suspected of having killed her brother because of his opposition to their relations, though under circumstances designed to incriminate his wealthy rival, Philip Langham, who had just telephoned to Nick.

The latter's investigations and the round-up of Preston and the Garcia gang had been a complete success, only to be followed by an extraordinary escape by the two criminals chiefly wanted by the law.

Nick had handcuffed these two together, as the others had been secured in pairs, and he then had given the entire gang in custody of the posse of police, who had arrived with the patrol wagon. He then had started for home with his two assistants, knowing their part of the work to have been successfully done.

The removal of the prisoners, however, was followed by an utterly unexpected occurrence. The heavily laden wagon, containing the gang and several policemen, rattled away from the house and turned the nearest corner on its way to the precinct station.

At the same moment an old motor truck, so old that it was next to worthless, sped through the side street, and, timed to a nicety, crashed against the side of the turning patrol wagon.

That this was deliberately done by a confederate of Garcia, who had learned of the arrest, and that the collision had been previously planned to meet just such an emergency, and in order that some of the gang, at least, might escape in the confusion, the police had not a doubt.

The effects of the collision were disastrous. The wagon, struck broadside, was overturned, and its occupants scattered over the street and sidewalk. The driver was knocked insensible and received a slightly fractured skull.

The chain connecting the steel rings on the wrists of Garcia and Gideon Preston broke when both were hurled into the street. Neither of the two men was injured, however, and both suddenly seized the opportunity presented, and escaped in the confusion and crowd that quickly collected. Neither since had been located.

None of the other prisoners were so fortunate, however, two of them being slightly injured, and all were held by the unhurt officers. It subsequently appeared, nevertheless, that no satisfactory case against them could be made. The driver of the truck leaped before the collision, and escaped in the darkness. His identity could not afterward be established. It could only be learned that the truck had been stolen, or so it was alleged, from a shed of a bottler of soft drinks in the next street. In how far he had connived at this knavery could only be conjectured.

These lesser lights in the crook galaxy were afterward liberated, the district attorney having decided that a profitable prosecution was improbable, and Nick encountered Rita Carvalli in Fifth Avenue about a week later, stylishly clad, and looking none the worse for her brief detention in custody, and her shattered love affairs.

There was a vicious gleam in her great black eyes, however, when she stopped to speak to him, smiling maliciously, and saying:

"Hello, Carter! You got fat on that big round-up last week, didn't you? How do you feel about it?"

"Oh, I'm not worrying," Nick replied indifferently. "It was no fault of mine that the chief crooks escaped."

"You dicks ought to have hung on to them yourselves, instead of handing them over to the bulls."

"There is some truth in that," Nick admitted.

"You expect to get them again, I suppose."

"I haven't thought much about it. Are you in a position to help me?"

"Not so you'll notice it."

"Don't you know where Garcia Preston is lying low?"

"If I did, Nick, do you know what I'd do?" questioned the girl.

"I can imagine what you might attempt to do," said Nick.

"I'd do it, too," snapped Rita, with vengeful asperity. "I'd find a way to give him all that's coming to him. I'll do as much for Phil Langham, too, and you know what that means. I'll get even with him for croaking my brother. I have taken an oath to do that, and you can bet I'll make good. Why hasn't he been arrested?"

"Because he is not guilty of the crime."

"Rot! Who is, then?"

"Tony Garcia is suspected."

"Rot again and more of it," sneered the girl. "That's the way with you dicks and bulls. Graft gets the best of you. Langham and his swell sister have barrels of money. They must have bribed you and the district attorney to kill the charge against him, and to try to fix the murder on Tony Garcia, since there's always a kick unless the law gets some victim. But it don't go, Carter, not with me. Phil Langham did that job, say what you will, and I'll hand him something to pay for it. I have written him to that effect, too, just to keep him on nettles."

"You seem to forget whom you're talking to," Nick said, a bit sternly. "I never accepted a bribe in my life. Looking for graft isn't in my line."

"Punk!" returned Rita. "Let you tell it, and you'd be a model, and the whole shooting match. Don't get an idea that you're the only shirt on the line. Take a tip from me."

"What's that?"

"Keep out of any mess in which Phil gets his. If you don't, you'll get hurt, for it's dead sure to come. I'll lay awake nights till I find a way to get across at him, or that sandy-haired sister of his who queered my game with Gid Preston. I'll trip both by the heels sooner or

later, and you'll be a wise gink if you don't meddle. Take all this from me, Carter, which shows that I don't fear you. That's all. So long!"

A month had passed since Rita Carvalli gave vent to this display of vengefulness and defiance, and it was to her threats made at that time that Patsy had just referred. Before his conversation with Chick could be resumed, however, Nick hurriedly rejoined them.

"Cut out the dessert," said he. "You must go with me to the Langham residence. I have sent for Danny and the touring car. He'll be at the door in five minutes."

"What's up?" Chick asked, rising.

"Rita Carvalli has made good, I think," Nick replied. "Luella Langham has mysteriously disappeared. We must get the particulars as quickly as possible."

CHAPTER II.

THE TRICK LETTER.

Nick Carter and his two assistants, in his speedy touring car, driven by Danny, his chauffeur, arrived just before eight o'clock in front of the handsome Langham residence, near Riverside Drive.

The hall and several of the lower rooms were brightly lighted, also two on the floor above, which Nick knew were occupied by Miss Langham for a private sitting room and her sleeping room.

Nick led the way to the rise of steps dividing the terraced grounds, and rang the bell. It was answered almost immediately by Payson, the butler, while Philip Langham came hurrying out of the library to meet him.

He was followed by a tall, handsome man in the thirties, Harrison Floyd, the lawyer to whom Luella was to be married the following month.

"Thank Heaven, Nick, you've arrived," Langham exclaimed, after a hasty general greeting. "Floyd and I are all at sea. We don't know what to think, what to do, nor which way to turn."

"So you turned to me, Phil, which is the best you could have done," replied Nick. "You need the help of a cool head. This matter is too near home and heart for either of you to possess that."

"That's true as Gospel, Nick," Floyd admitted. "I confess that my heart is like lead, and my nerves are writhing insects."

"Come into the library," Langham added, leading the way. "Will you smoke?"

"No, no, Phil, no cigars," Nick protested, while they were taken into the handsomely furnished room. "Let's get right down to business. You phoned me that Luella left home just before noon to-day, saying that she would return at five o'clock. It now is about eight, only three hours later, yet you also stated tha——"

"Nick, I am absoluely sure that she would have returned before six, if not the victim of a mishap, or deviltry of some kind." Langham forcibly interrupted.

"Why are you so sure of it?"

"Because she has a very important engagement this evening. She was to go with Floyd and me to confer with Judge Palmer, of the surrogate court, to conclude several legal matters pertaining to the settlement of my father's estate. That involves about five millions, you know, and Judge Palmer requested us to come to his residence this evening."

"H'm, I see!"

"I know, therefore, that Luella would have been here in time to keep that appointment, barring an accident, or some kind of knavery. In view of a threatening letter received from Rita Carvalli, moreover, about a month ago——"

"I know about that," Nick interposed. "Now, Phil, what have you done about it?"

"I have telephoned to the hospitals, but cannot learn of any accident in which a woman of Luella's description figured. I have talked with Judge Palmer, also, telling him of the circumstances. He has neither seen nor heard from her. I then was all at sea, Nick, and called you up."

"It looks bad, Carter, beastly bad," Floyd declared, gravely shaking his head.

"Let's get down to bare facts, then," said Nick. "Did you see Luella at breakfast, Phil?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Did she speak of going out this afternoon?"

"Not a word. She would have done so, however, if she then had intended going. She always tells me her plans for the day. She received a telephone message about ten o'clock, however, which I think led her to go."

"A message from whom?"

"I don't know. I then was downtown and did not returned until four o'clock. Payson answered the telephone call, and all that he can tell me——"

"One moment," Nick interrupted. "Call Payson in here. I'll hear his statements firsthand, and see what I make of them."

The butler was hurriedly summoned, an elderly man, who had been in the employ of the Langham family for close upon twenty years.

"At what time, Payson, did you receive a telephone call for Miss Langham?" Nick inquired.

"About ten o'clock, sir," replied Payson respectfully.

"Do you know who phoned her?"

"I do not, sir."

"Was it the voice of a man, or woman?"

"A woman, sir. She wanted to know whether Miss Langham was at home, and then she asked me to call her to the telephone. I did so, and Miss Langham talked with her."

"Did you hear what she said?"

"No, sir. I did not return to the library."

Nick glanced at a telephone on a stand in one corner.

"How long did Miss Langham talk with the woman?" he asked.

"About two minutes, sir, I should say."

"Not an important communication, then, ordinarily. What followed?"

"Miss Langham returned to her room, sir," said Payson. "About eleven o'clock a man called with a letter for her, which I took up to her room. She then told me she would lunch downtown to-day, and said she would return about five o'clock."

"Did she tell you that, Payson, before or after reading the letter?"

"Before reading it, sir. She had not opened the letter."

"Ah, that points to a connection between the letter and the telephone communication, the latter evidently having influenced her to leave home. If there were no connection between the two, she naturally would have read the letter before informing Payson of her intentions, lest its contents might have prevented her from going."

"That's shrewdly reasoned, Nick," put in Chick. "It looks like a sure thing."

"Was the messenger one in the business, Payson?" Nick inquired. "Did he wear a uniform, or a lettered cap?"

"No, sir," said the butler. "He was a short, dark man, in a brown suit. He said there was no answer, sir, and he did not wait."

"Did you see Miss Langham again this morning?"

"Yes, sir. I was in the hall when she left home. She merely told me to tell Mr. Langham, if he came in before her, that she would return about five o'clock."

"That convinces me, Nick, that she had absolutely no thought of remaining longer," put in Langham. "I feel positively sure that she is the victim of foul play."

"How was she clad, Payson?" inquired Chick.

"In a gray broadcloth suit, sir, and a gray hat."

"The woman in gray," thought Nick. "The same suit in which she was seen in the Orville."

Nick had recalled how oddly Luella had figured in the Darcy murder case, also Preston's aspirations to her hand and fortune. He knew that this miscreant, still at large, was now capable of any degree of knavery.

In view of Rita Carvalli's threats, moreover, and the animosity of the Garcia gang for Phil Langham, Nick also knew that if Luella was really a victim of foul play, that the case might prove to be a very complicated one.

"Did she depart in a conveyance of any kind, Payson?" he inquired.

"No, sir," said the butler. Then, with respectful diffidence: "But it is barely possible, sir, if I may say so, that she employed a public taxicab that stands on the corner below. She sometimes does so, sir, and she turned in that direction."

"Have you looked into that, Langham?" asked Nick.

"No. I have not thought of it."

"Go out to the corner, Patsy, and see whether the chauffeur is there. If so, find out whether Miss Langham employed him, and where he took her."

"Sure thing, chief, and anything more that he can tell me," said Patsy, hastening from the room.

"That's all, Payson," said Nick. "Now, Chick, get next to the telephone. Ring up the exchange station and find out, if possible, where that call came from this morning. State that I want the information in connection with a criminal case. It may expedite matters."

"I think quite likely," Chick said dryly, while he hastened to comply.

"Now, Langham, have you looked for a note explaining your sister's absence?" Nick inquired, turning to him.

"There is no occasion," Phil argued. "She would have left such a note in plain sight."

"Have you searched for the letter she received?"

"I have looked in the desk in her sitting room, where she naturally would have put it. But I could not find it. She may, of course, have taken it with her."

"Did you look in her wastebasket?"

"No. By Jove, I didn't think of that," Phil exclaimed.

"Let's have a look," said Nick, rising. "I'm inclined to think the letter is here—or what's left of it."

"Left of it?"

"She may have destroyed it," Nick explained, while Langham was leading the way upstairs.

They entered an attractively furnished sitting room, in one corner of which stood an open desk, with a wastebasket near it, to which Langham at once gave his attention.

In the meantime, well informed of some of the customs of women, Nick began an examination of several books lying on a table, thinking the letter might have been temporarily placed in one of them. He failed to find it, and turned to the open desk, but he then was diverted by a cry from Langham.

"There is nothing in the wastebasket, Nick, except a torn sheet of blank paper and a blank envelope."

"A blank envelope!" echoed Nick.

"Yes. It's torn in half."

"Who tears blank envelopes and throws them away?"

"See for yourself."

Langham dumped the contents of the wastebasket upon the table.

Nick picked up half of the torn envelope and examined it. It was smooth, perfectly clean, and made of excellent paper. He could see no reason for its having been destroyed. An examination of several fragments of a sheet of similar paper shed no light on the matter.

"I don't quite fathom this," said Nick, a bit abruptly.

"What do you mean?" questioned Langham, gazing.

"The creases in some of these fragments show that the sheet has been folded. It presumably was inclosed in this envelope."

"Well, well, what of that?"

"That's just the question. Why are both blank? A blank sheet is sometimes folded around money, or a check, for mailing or delivering, but in that case one would surely take the precaution of addressing the envelope."

"By Jove, it's a bit mysterious," said Langham.

"Light this oil lamp, Phil," said Nick, pointing to one used by Miss Langham when reading. "I'll go a step further."

Langham hastened to obey.

Nick then held part of the torn envelope in the heat above the lamp chimney, and, after a few moments, he examined it again. Faint traces of writing then were discernible—part of Luella Langham's name and address.

"Ah, I have it!" he exclaimed. "Use has been made of an ink which fades after a few hours. The heat serves to partly restore it. Starch treated with iodine will produce such ink. Quinoline so used will vanish if exposed to the sun's rays. Help me match these fragments, Langham, and we'll paste the edges together and soon find out what writing the sheet contained."

"This surely denotes foul play, Nick, if you are right," observed Langham apprehensively.

"As sure as death and taxes, Phil."

"Do you think——"

"Don't ask what I think, Phil, at present," Nick interrupted. "Give me time enough to dig up evidence upon which to base an opinion."

Nick soon obtained his first tangible clue. Ten minutes enabled him to restore the faded writing so that it could be read.

The envelope bore only Luella Langham's address.

The sheet contained the following brief communication, in a faint feminine hand:

"My Dear Luella:

"Inclosed find the ticket about which I telephoned you at ten o'clock. I hope you will enjoy the performance.

Your loving Myra."

"Myra!" exclaimed Langham, when the detective read the missive aloud. "Why, that must have come from Myra Bragdon, my sister's most intimate friend."

"Ah, I see!"

"She must have phoned Luella to learn whether she would use a ticket to some matinée performance. Learning that she would, she evidently sent it to her by a messenger. That explains why Leulla expected to return soon after five. This lets out the telephone message and the letter. They don't figure in the case."

"Don't they?" said Nick, a bit grimly. "Will you tell me, then, why this Myra used ink that must have been made with some covert design? No such ink is on sale."

"But Myra Bragdon is above any kind of duplicity."

"No doubt," Nick admitted. "And that convinces me that she did not send the letter. It is a forgery. It was sent by a crook who wanted the ink to fade after the letter had served his purpose, that it might never be produced in evidence against him."

"Good God!" gasped Langham, with color waning. "Surely, then, Luella is a victim of a plot."

"This leaves no room for a doubt," replied Nick, placing the letter and envelope in his notebook. "But you must keep cool and a stiff upper lip, Phil, and let me do the thinking and acting. Whoever the conspirators are, I don't think they are out to kill your sister, nor to subject her to any serious personal injury. They more likely are after a big wad of money in return for her release."

"A ransom?"

"Exactly—which never shall with my consent be paid," Nick declared. "Let me handle the case, Phil, and do what I think is best. We'll return to the library and see what Chick has learned."

Chick had obtained the desired information.

The telephone call had come from a pay station in a drug store in Amsterdam Avenue.

"That's in line with what I suspected," said Nick. "Now, Phil, call up Miss Bragdon and see what she will tell you."

Langham hastened to do so, and the result was doubly convincing.

Miss Bragdon had neither telephoned nor written to Luella Langham.

"Ah, here's Patsy returning," said Nick, upon hearing the doorbell. "He may have found another link in the chain."

Patsy hurried into the room while Nick was speaking.

"Gee! That's right, chief," he cried. "But I had to wait until the chauffeur showed up with his taxi. Miss Langham employed him this morning."

"Where did he take her?"

"To Poulon's French restaurant, in Fifth Avenue. He left her there before one o'clock."

"Capital!" Nick exclaimed. "We have picked up the trail—and now to follow it."

"I'll call up the restaurant," cried Langham, seizing the telephone.

"Stop!" Nick quickly objected. "Do nothing of the kind. I will go to the restaurant."

"Well, well, then, I'll go with you."

"On the contrary, Langham, you and Floyd remain right here," Nick insisted. "You cannot aid me in this work, and might only delay me. I will do all that can be done, and do it as quickly as possible. No, no, no objections. I will undertake it only on a condition that you do what I direct. That's final, Phil."

Philip Langham strode nearer the famous detective and held out his hand.

"Not another word," said he. "The case is up to you, Nick."

CHAPTER III.

THE LOST TRAIL.

"To Poulon's, the French restaurant, in Fifth Avenue. Let her go lively!"

These were Nick Carter's instructions to his chauffeur when he entered his touring car, into which Chick and Patsy already had scrambled at precisely half past eight that evening.

"Lively goes, chief," replied Danny, while his hand sought the clutch lever.

In another moment the powerful car swerved from the curbing and soon was speeding south along Riverside Drive. The night was clear. The heavens were a purple dome sprinkled with golden stars. The November air was crisp and invigorating. It was a stimulant to the work engaging the detective, if stimulant was needed.

"Well, we've hit the trail, Nick, if we can contrive to follow it," Chick remarked, as they buttoned their overcoats around them.

"We must follow it," Nick said simply.

"How do you size up the circumstances?"

"As far as I have gone, Chick, they speak for themselves," said Nick. "Miss Langham is the victim of a gang."

"Undoubtedly."

"Whether Rita Carvalli and the Garcia gang are back of the conspiracy, bent upon avenging the murder of the girl's brother, or whether Gideon Preston is the ringleader, bent upon refilling his empty purse with a slice of the Langham fortune, can only be conjectured at this stage of the game. Be that as it may, Chick, several points are obvious."

"In regard to the opening moves of the gang?"

"Exactly," said Nick. "They learned that Miss Langham is intimate with Myra Bragdon. They contrived to obtain a specimen of the latter's handwriting. One of them, a woman who successfully imitated Miss Bragdon's voice, telephoned to Luella to learn whether she would use a matinée ticket to some theater, or other attraction, probably pretending that she herself was prevented from using it by some other engagement."

"Sure!" put in Chick. "I get you."

"When it was found that Miss Langham would accept it, a messenger was sent to deliver it. It was inclosed in a note forged with Miss Bragdon's signature, and in her handwriting, in order that all misgivings on Luella's part, if any existed, should be entirely removed. Thus far, Chick, the game of the gang is obvious."

"I agree with you. Furthermore," Chick added, "their next move was to be made in a theater, or wherever the performance was to occur."

"Certainly. Otherwise, they would not have lured her there."

"Can you find out what theater, or——"

"We must find out," Nick interrupted. "We will follow the trail to the French restaurant, and see what Poulon

can tell us. I am well acquainted with him. He will do all he can to aid me."

The run was made in less than a quarter hour, and Danny slipped into a place just left by the departure of a taxicab from the long line of motor cars in front of the fashionable restaurant.

Nick sprang out, followed only by Chick, and led the way into a beautifully decorated reception room adjoining the restaurant itself. They found Mr. Poulon, an obsequious little Frenchman, all smiles, and bows, and scrapings, attending to the wants of the coming and going patrons. He recognized Nick and hastened to meet him.

"Hey!" he exclaimed. "Good evening, my dear Carter. There will be a table for you in a very few minutes, very few. Come into the smoking room, and——"

"No, Poulon, we'll wait right here," Nick interposed, as they paused in one corner of the spacious room. "I am on business to-night. I am trying to trace a lady who lunched here about one o'clock to-day."

"*Pardieu!*" Poulon cried, with a shrug. "There were five hundred who lunched here."

"But this lady came alone and arrived in a taxicab," said Nick. "She wore a gray suit and hat, and——"

"Ah!" Poulon ejaculated. "I know! I saw her when she entered. You mean Miss Langham, who frequently honors me by——"

"The same," Nick interrupted. "Do you know where she went from here?"

"*Sacrée!* How could I know?"

"At what time did she leave?"

"Just before two—a quarter hour maybe."

"Did she lunch alone?"

"I am not sure. Wait!" said Poulon. "I will call Jacque, the waiter who served her. He may tell you something. One moment."

He stepped to a broad doorway near by and beckoned. This brought from the restaurant a tall, slender young man, to whom Poulon glibly stated what was required of him.

"Tell Mr. Carter whatever you know, Jacque," he then directed. "Omit nothing. Answer his questions."

Jacque knew Miss Langham by sight, and he remembered having served her. He responded promptly to the detective's repeated inquiry.

"Yes, sir, she lunched alone," said he. "She was in some haste, sir, for she was going to a theater."

"Ah!" said Nick. "Did she tell you so?"

"She did, sir, that I might hurry her lunch," Jacque responded. "I also saw her ticket."

"How was that?"

"It was too long for a compartment of her pocketbook. She had it between them and the flap, and when she opened the pocketbook to give me the money for her check, she laid the ticket on the table. It was face up, sir, a ticket to the New Hyperion."

"Very good," said Nick, with much more satisfaction than he displayed. "What color was the ticket, Jacque?"

"It was yellow, sir."

"You did not, I suppose, notice the letters or number on the coupon."

"You mean the number of the seat, sir?"

"Yes."

"I did," said Jacque, bowing. "I had to wait for Miss Langham to select a bank note with which I paid her bill, and I noticed the number because it corresponded exactly with the amount of change on her lunch check. Her lunch came to a dollar and twenty cents. Twenty, sir, was the number on the coupon."

"That's all, Jacque, and I'm greatly obliged," said Nick. "Thanks to you, Poulon, also."

"*Pardieu!*" Poulon exclaimed, rubbing his hands. "The pleasure is all mine, my dear Mr. Carter."

"By Jove, that waiter proved to be an animated encyclopedia," Chick dryly observed, while the two detectives returned to the waiting car.

"He certainly supplied us with another stretch of the trail," said Nick.

"Miss Langham must have remained in the New Hyperion until the end of the matinée performance."

"Presumably. We now must learn what then occurred, or during the performance."

"During the performance?"

"Exactly."

"But what could have been done at that time?" Chick questioned doubtfully. "The New Hyperion is playing to its capacity. It is packed at every performance. What could the rascals have accomplished under such conditions?"

"That's an open question," replied Nick, after taking his seat in the tonneau, and giving Danny his instructions. "It is perfectly plain that they lured Miss Langham to the theater, Chick, and artfully provided her with a ticket that insured her occupying a certain seat."

"True."

"They must have had some object, then, in wanting her in that particular seat," Nick argued. "They had something up their sleeves, some design upon her, and it therefore is a safe gamble that one of them occupied an adjoining seat, or one on each side of her, perhaps, since nothing could well have been accomplished from a distance."

"I see the point," said Chick. "The scamps could easily have procured the several tickets, afterward sending her the one that would serve their purpose."

"Certainly. That, in my opinion, is precisely what was done."

"We may learn something at the theater."

"I think so," said Nick confidently. "We know where Miss Langham sat. The ushers may remember her. They may remember who occupied the adjoining seats, also, and be able to describe them. We shall presently know."

The brightly illumined entrance of Broadway's latest acquisition in the theater line had suddenly come into view, when they rounded a near corner. Danny brought the car to a stop a few rods from the door.

Nick at once alighted and approached to question a special policeman employed outside the theater, while Chick and Patsy sauntered into the lobby and waited near the box office.

"Hello, Brady," said Nick, familiarly addressing the officer. "How's business?"

"Oh, it is you, Nick," said Brady, turning. "I didn't know your voice. Business, eh? Bang up!"

"That's the stuff! Were you on duty here this afternoon?"

"Sure. Every afternoon."

"Did you see anything unusual?"

"Unusual?" echoed Brady, squinting. "Why, no, not that I recall."

"Listen. I am trying to trace a missing woman. She attended the matinée here to-day. She wore a gray suit and hat. She came alone, and——"

"Hold on!" Brady quietly exclaimed, with countenance lighting. "I've got you, Nick. She may have come alone, but she did not leave alone."

"Ah, you saw her, then," said Nick.

"I sure did," Brady nodded. "Your speaking of the gray suit and hat reminded me."

"Of what?"

"Why, it was nothing for me to butt into, yet I noticed it," Brady proceeded to explain. "The woman you mean, most likely, came out after the show with another woman and a man. Each had hold of her arm. I thought she looked a bit white and confused, and I reckoned that she was affected by the heat in the theater and needed fresh air."

"What followed?"

"All three stood on the sidewalk for a few moments, until an automobile could pull up to the curbing. The woman in gray didn't seem much inclined to enter it, but the others evidently persuaded her to do so. They all rode away in the automobile. That's all I can tell you."

"You can describe her companions," said Nick.

"Not the woman, Nick, except to say that she has a fine figure and wore a dark-blue suit. I'd say at random that she's about twenty-five. Her face was veiled."

"What about the man?"

"He was a well-dressed, dark-featured fellow, clad in a plaid suit and a rough overcoat. He wore a felt hat and looked to be about forty."

"I guess I won't bank upon his looks this afternoon," Nick said dryly. "Was it a public auto, Brady?"

"I don't think so."

"Chauffeur in livery?"

"No."

"Could you identify him?"

"I wouldn't swear to him. I didn't notice him particularly."

"That's all, then," said Nick. "I'm going in to see Manager Rosebaum. I wish to question the ushers. Don't mention any of this."

"I'm dumb," nodded Brady.

A few moments later found the three detectives seated with Mr. Rosebaum in his private office.

Nick briefly stated the circumstances, also where Luella Langham was seated that afternoon, and two ushers daily employed in the nearest aisle were called into the room.

One of them remembered nothing about a woman in gray, and could give Nick no information.

The other proved more profitable.

"I remember the woman distinctly," said he. "I showed her to her seat. She came alone, and had the fourth seat from the aisle."

"Who occupied the next seat on each side of her?"

"A man with a full beard was in the third seat when the woman came in. I remembered him because he had to rise to let the lady pass. A little later a woman in a dark-blue suit came with a coupon for the fifth seat, next to the woman in gray."

"Was she light or dark?" Nick asked.

"Light. A pronounced blonde, sir, with yellow hair. It looked as if it had been bleached."

"What age?"

"About twenty-five."

"Her figure?"

"A very good figure, sir, and she was above medium height. She's a good looker."

"Did she speak to the woman in gray when she entered?" inquired Nick, withholding Miss Langham's name.

"No, not then," said the usher.

"Later?"

"Yes, sir. It was while I was passing water after the second act."

"What was said?"

"I don't know what was said, sir. The woman in gray put out her hand for some water, but both the blonde woman and the man with a beard whispered to her, and the man glanced at me and shook his head. The woman in gray appeared to yield without any objection, but I thought she looked pale and dazed. That's all I can tell you, sir, for I had to go on up the aisle."

"You did not see them leave the theater?"

"No, sir."

"That's all," said Nick. "Much obliged."

Both ushers withdrew from the room.

Manager Rosebaum looked annoyed and apprehensive.

"I hope, Mr. Carter," said he, "that nothing wrong has been done in my theater."

"Nothing for which you are in the least degree responsible," Nick assured him.

"I hope not. It would ruin us."

"But," Nick quickly added, "it is very evident that Miss Langham was stealthily drugged, or by some means so affected that she became dazed and subservient to the couple between whom she was seated. I suspected something of the kind. They have abducted her."

"Surely," Chick agreed. "There is nothing else to it, Nick, as far as we've gone."

"Gee! We have lost the trail, now, for fair," said Patsy. "What's to be done, chief?"

"We'll take steps to pick it up again," replied Nick, glancing at his watch. "It now is nine o'clock. Is there a back way, Mr. Rosebaum, by which one can go from this office to Broadway? I want one of my assistants to do so without being seen."

"Certainly. He can go through the box office and around back of the stage. I will show him the way."

"Thank you. Have you a disguise in your pocket, Patsy?"

"Sure thing!" cried Patsy, quickly producing one. "What's the scheme?"

"I think we may safely attribute this job to Rita Carvalli and some of the Garcia gang, possibly including Tony Garcia himself. You remember Derosa, Picconi, Jasper Meagle, and Gil Hart, whom we arrested in the Forsyth Street house."

"Perfectly," said Patsy.

"If I am right," Nick added, "one of them may be stealthily watching this theater, with a view to finding out whether efforts already are being made to trace Miss Langham, and whether her trail up to this point has been successfully followed."

"I see," said Patsy. "You want me to go out and try to discover him."

"Exactly."

"What if I find him?"

"Trail him to cover, Patsy, and be governed by circumstances," Nick directed. "It's long odds, assuming that I

am right, that I was seen and recognized when talking with Brady. That being the case, a spy probably would hasten to report to his confederates immediately after my departure. I will remain here with Chick about twenty minutes, therefore, which will give you time to nose around outside."

"I'm on, chief," said Patsy, who had transfigured himself into a counterpart of a Bowery tough.

"Don't report to me when we come out to the car," added Nick. "Unless you discover a suspect, stick to your job until after the theater is closed for the night."

"Enough said, chief. I've got you."

"Go ahead, then."

Manager Rosebaum arose and conducted Patsy from the room.

"Now, Chick, we have got to get in some lively work," Nick said earnestly, when they were alone. "We can follow this trail no farther. It ends here. We have reached a jumping-off place, so to speak, where chances must be taken, and quick and decisive work must be done. I am convinced that Rita Carvalli and the Garcia gang are back of this job."

"Why not Preston?"

"Because the job has required several persons, the couple in the theater, the chauffeur, and probably others," Nick pointed out. "Gid Preston tumbled from his social position into the underworld only a month ago. He could not in that time have picked up confederates on whom he would feel it safe to depend for such a job as this. Furthermore, the crime itself is more in line with the work of the Garcia gang, and the vengeful desires of Rita Carvalli."

"I begin to think you are right, Nick," replied Chick thoughtfully.

"I'm going to take that chance," Nick declared. "We must start in immediately after leaving here, therefore, and get after those members of the Garcia gang whose habitual haunts are known."

"I'm with you."

"Not exactly with me, Chick, for we must get in our work separately in order to cover more ground. I'll tackle the male members of the gang, and see what I can accomplish. In the meantime, you must hunt up Rita Carvalli and find out, if possible, what she has been doing to-day."

"She used to rent a flat in Park Avenue."

"That was when Gid Preston was paying her bills. She no longer is there. I happen to know, however, that she has been recently spending her evenings in the red-light district below Fourteenth Street. Now, Chick, here's a point."

"Well?" queried Chick.

"Assuming that we have not been seen this evening by any of the gang, they probably feel that their job was so craftily done that Miss Langham could not possibly be traced in so short a time."

"Naturally."

"It is quite likely, therefore, that they now are in their customary haunts, and conducting themselves as if nothing had occurred, in order to avert later suspicion by denoting that they have no unusual interest elsewhere."

"I see the point," Chick nodded. "It's well worth acting upon."

"We will do so, and lose no time about it. Much may be accomplished in the five hours before the city sleeps."

It was half past nine when the two detectives left the theater. Both glanced furtively around while returning to their waiting car.

In no direction, however, was there any sign of Patsy Garvan.

CHAPTER IV.

CHICK TAKES A CHANCE.

Nick Carter had figured on five hours in which he and his assistants could get in their work. That meant until half past two the next morning—but what of it? There are precincts in New York that do not go to bed at all—in the night.

Beauty sleep in many sections east of Broadway is absolutely unknown. Breakfast is served anywhere from high noon to early dusk. The day really begins with the setting of the sun. Midnight is the shank of the evening.

It was early at half past ten, therefore, when Chick Carter arrived in front of a notorious concert hall just around an equally notorious corner of East Fourteenth Street. Here he paused to gaze through its broad plate windows.

His interest was not in the thronged saloon, however, the glittering bar, the palm decorations, and potted plants, nor in the score of aproned waiters hurrying hither and thither with drinks of every kind, size, hue, and description.

Chick's gaze turned, instead, upon the multitude of bibulous persons gathered at numerous small tables, and in the booths flanking the side walls, a throng absorbed in their potations, their small talk, their cigars and cigarettes, and in the strains of a masked orchestra in the rear of the hall.

Chick knew this place to be a frequent and favorite resort of Rita Carvalli. He could not discover her from outside, however, nor would he have been likely to if circumstances had led her to adopt precautions corresponding with his own. For he was disguised with artistic skill. His firm mouth was concealed with a flowing black mustache. He was clad a bit flashily, and might well have been taken for a man familiar with every nocturnal aspect of the city.

"There's nothing doing from out here," he muttered, after a vain scrutiny of as much of the place as he could see through the windows. "I'll go in and wait a while. She's more likely to show up here at this time, than in any other place I can visit."

Chick sauntered in as if with no covert designs, and found an unoccupied chair at one of the small tables. A waiter approached, and he ordered a drink and cigars. He appeared to have no interest in the other patrons of the place.

The smoke from the innumerable cigarettes and cigars hovered in a filmy blue haze near the frescoed ceiling. The ceaseless clatter of tongues, frequent loud laughter, occasional snatches of song from boisterous groups in parts of the vast room, served to nearly drown the ragtime music of the orchestra.

Chick glanced around carelessly, visually taking in every nook and corner of the deep room, but he could not discover Rita Carvalli.

Alone in one of the near booths, however, was a soli-

tary girl whose face and part of whose figure were concealed by the flimsy festooned curtains draping its entrance. Naturally, therefore, Chick kept a furtive eye on her until he could see her plainly.

Her garments were stylish and of glaring design. Her figure was attractive, large, without being gross, and over medium height. Her round, supple arms smacked of physical culture. Her long gloves were lying on the narrow table. Her fingers toyed with a partly drunk glass of Bénédictine. She appeared to be waiting for some one.

Presently, when she leaned forward to sip her cordial, Chick was able to see her face—and he felt sure that he recognized her.

It was that of a girl in the twenties, a pronounced blonde, with masses of yellow hair overhanging her brow. It was an attractive face, barring a certain sinister expression in her gray eyes, and the rouge, that marred her fair complexion, partly hiding unmistakable signs of dissipation. Chick was quick to see that she looked anxious and impatient.

"By Jove, that's Jasper Meagle's sister, Mollie Meagle, or I'll eat my hat," he said to himself. "He is one of the Garcia gang, and this girl is one of Rita Carvalli's running mates. She comes very near answering the usher's description of the blonde woman in the theater. I may hook on as well, by gracious, if I continue to keep an eye on her, instead of seeking the other. She must have some occasion for being here alone."

Chick had identified the girl correctly. There was, moreover, no mistaking her social status, the figure she elected to cut in the diversified pattern formed by the warp and woof of life in the modern Babylon. Furtively watching her, Chick saw her clouded eyes suddenly brighten.

A slender young man in a plaid suit and dark overcoat was approaching the booth. He stopped and shook hands with the girl. He did not appear to be more than twenty, with thin dark features, and a black mustache.

"She has been waiting for him," thought Chick. "Hang it, where have I seen him? This is not the first time, I'll swear, though I'm blessed if I can place him."

Contrary to Chick's expectation, however, this unknown factor did not enter the booth. Instead, he talked earnestly with Mollie Meagle for several minutes, with his back toward the detective all the while, and then he departed and left the girl again in solitary contemplation of her partly drained glass.

"Humph!" Chick mentally ejaculated. "What's that mean, I wonder. She evidently was not waiting for that chap, after all. She must be expecting some one else, possibly Rita Carvalli. I'll stick round, by Jove, until I can pick up something definite."

Ten minutes passed.

Mollie Meagle waved her hand to a waiter and ordered another cordial.

Chick considered whether he had better join her, and while pretending to cultivate her acquaintance, undertake to worm a self-betrayal from her. The move did not appeal to him.

"She's as fly as they make," he said to himself. "She'd suspect me right off the reel, providing I'm right in thinking her the woman seen with Miss Langham. I could get by easily if the overture came from her, but I can't hope for that. She's got something else on her mind."

Chick's reasoning was logical, but he soon discovered that his premises were incorrect.

The waiter returned and served the girl, and Mollie Meagle paid him. While she did so, her gaze drifted in the direction of the detective. She appeared to see him for the first time, and, after a moment, she favored him with a less vacant look than she bestowed upon others. Her eyes took on an expression of awakened interest.

Chick returned the look, then smiled expressively.

Miss Meagle did not resent the familiarity. Embarrassment did not deepen the rose tint in her cheeks. She squinted significantly, then cast a languorous eye toward the vacant seat on the opposite side of the narrow table—and Chick promptly approached to take it.

"I thought I recognized you," said he conventionally. "But it's some little time, Fannie, since I saw you."

Mollie laughed and shook hands with him.

"Cut out that Fannie guff," she replied, with naïve inelegance. "Me monaker is Mollie—plain Mollie Meagle. D'ye get it?"

"Sure! But I came pretty near it," laughed Chick.

"Nears don't count. Plant yourself. It beats standing."

"By a wide margin," Chick agreed, complying. "What have you got in your mind?"

"As little as I have in me purse—and that's on the blink," said the girl, with a smile.

"You don't look it."

"Looks are deceiving. What's your name?"

"Jack Fleming," said Chick readily. "I'm a tea taster for a Worth Street importer. I'm glad I happened in here to-night. Down your cordial, Mollie, and have another. I'm heeled for anything you want."

Mollie laughed and shook her head.

"Not for mine, Jack," she replied. "I've had three, and that's me limit to-night. I'm going home strictly sober."

"Home at this hour? Nonsense!"

"You heard me."

"But you don't mean it."

"Don't I?"

"I hope not, Mollie."

"Sorry to disappoint you, Jack, but I'm not out on the branches to-night," Mollie suavely insisted. "Owling it every night in the week would knock spots out of me complexion. Besides, I've got a gasoline wagon waitin' for me outside. That costs money, you know."

"Yes, real money," Chick allowed. "Home at this hour. It seems incredible."

"Or deplorable?" queried Mollie archly.

She leaned forward, shrugging her shapely shoulders, and placed both of her hands on one of his. There was an alluring light in her eyes, and Chick appeared to fall for it.

"Both," he declared quickly.

"Why? Are you sorry to part from me so soon?"

"You bet! That's just how I feel."

"On the level?"

"On the dead level, Mollie. You're making a hit with me, for fair."

Mollie laughed softly and pressed his hand.

"Go with me, then," she suggested. "There's room for two in me motor."

"Go with you?"

"Why not? You might go as far as me door, at least, if you mean what you say. The chauffeur will bring you back. He hangs out round here."

Chick's mind was working more rapidly. He saw plainly

that Mollie Meagle wanted him to accompany her, but her motive was far from being as obvious. Was it only that of a disreputable woman, or was she actuated with a more covert and desperate purpose? Did she suspect his identity and designs, and was she scheming to lure him into a trap?

Chick could not then believe the last, and he resolved to take a chance that her invitation was only conventional, and that by accepting it he could discover the gang he was seeking, and, perhaps, the whereabouts of Luella Langham.

"Is it far from here?" he asked, when she ceased speaking.

"Is what far?"

"Your home."

"No place is far in New York," laughed Mollie evasively. "It's up Harlem way. I'll show you. The chauffeur knows. He'll take us. What's the matter, anyway?" she impatiently added. "Are you afraid to go home in the dark?"

Chick laughed.

"Not afraid," he replied "I was only wondering whether I'd go home at all after making friends with you. You're some circe, Mollie."

"Don't be a wop," said Mollie, drawing on her gloves. "You can do as you like, Jack, but I'm off for me motor. Be a good sport and go with me."

"That settles it," declared Chick, rising. "Good sport goes, Mollie, and I'm with you."

CHAPTER V.

A COUNTERGAME.

"Where's the taxi?" asked Chick, after emerging with Mollie Meagle from the concert hall. "I thought you had one waiting for you."

"So I have," said Mollie. "It's round the corner. Take me wing—the other one, Jack, if it's all the same to you."

"Either of your arms, Mollie, is good enough for me," Chick gallantly rejoined, while he complied.

He was still considerably puzzled, nevertheless, by the conduct of the girl. He could not see why she was so desirous of his company. For only two hours had passed since the search for Luella Langham was begun, and Chick did not believe that Mollie Meagle could have become informed of the investigations then in progress, or by any means have discovered his identity.

"I'll give her all the rope she wants, by Jove, till I can learn what she has up her sleeve," he resolved a bit grimly. "She must have some strong motive, or she would not have picked me up so readily. I'll find out before I quit her, if it takes a leg. There's her taxi, as stated, so she told me the truth to that extent, at least."

They had turned the corner and were approaching a taxicab that was waiting at the curbing. The chauffeur was on the seat, muffled to the ears in a greatcoat. He appeared to have been half asleep, but aroused himself when he heard the girl, and jumped out and turned over his engine.

"Here I am, Jerry," she cried. "Are you tired of waiting?"

"Waiting is part of my infernal business," growled the chauffeur. "Where to?"

"Home," Mollie tersely directed. "Tumble in, Jack, and leave this end of the seat for me. I want the open window."

"I'll open the other, if you say so," said Chick, seeing that the one in the opposite door was closed.

"No, don't, not on your tintype," Mollie quickly protested. "That would make a draft and give me the epizootic. Me lungs is weak. That's why I has to have air, but no draft. It's all right as 'tis, Jack, and you don't mind."

She had banged the door while speaking, and nestled at Chick's side.

"Certainly not," said he, resolved to give her a free line. "Any old way that suits you, Mollie, suits me."

"That's the proper spirit, honey."

Jerry, so called, had started, and the taxi swerved from the curbing and tacked across Fourteenth Street.

Chick settled back on the cushions and pretended to find enjoyment in the stream of soft talk that Mollie poured into his ears. He replied in like strain at intervals, and wondered to what his venture was to lead. He was not, however, to be left long in doubt.

Ten minutes passed.

Mollie yawned repeatedly, and her eyelids began to droop. She appeared to be growing drowsy, and her tongue moved less rapidly.

Chick was glad of it—and was doubly suspicious.

The rapidly moving taxi had crossed Fifty-ninth Street and entered Central Park.

Mollie nestled a little nearer her companion—but kept her face toward the open window.

Chick sat gazing straight ahead as if wrapped in thought.

The girl's hand stole among the loose folds of her waist. She drew out a handkerchief, and held it to her nostrils. Presently the muscles of her right arm, that next to Chick, contracted slightly.

Though it was hardly perceptible, Chick was quick to detect it. At the same moment he felt what seemed to be—a faint breath of air across his face.

It was scarcely sensible. It was like a momentary draft through a keyhole. It was so slight that he at first was not sure of it—until the muscular contraction was repeated, instantly followed by the same faint sensation.

"Humph! I was right," thought Chick, without stirring. "The jade is provided with some kind of a contrivance with which to dope me. She is forcing an odorless gas, or vapor of some kind, toward my nostrils. That's why she wants this window closed, and is keeping her own nostrils covered. This must be how Luella Langham was tricked and doped in the theater. This crafty devil sat next to her. H'm, I see!"

Chick had begun to feel the effect of the subtle gas. An irresistible lassitude was stealing over him. A feeling of indifference took possession of him. The lights in the near avenue began to turn yellow, with a misty halo surrounding them. His fingers tingled slightly, and his tongue felt thick and cold.

Mollie Meagle now was furtively watching him from under her drooping lids.

Chick detected her. He then was far from being so overcome that he did not clearly realize what he was doing, as must have been Miss Langham's condition when observed by Brady and the theater usher.

Remembering their description of her, Chick at once decided what he would do. He felt sure that he could

resist the influence of the subtle agent, whatever it was, and also deceive the girl.

He brought all of his vigorous mental power into play, and each time he felt the contraction of Mollie's arm, and the faint sensation described, he held his breath for a few seconds. Again and again this was repeated, and he soon discovered that the subtle gas was too diffusive to be effective, unless immediately inhaled when ejected near his nostrils. It seemed to come, he also detected, from a tiny rubber tube concealed in her lace scarf, the end of which was directed toward his nostrils; while the ejection appeared to be caused by the pressure of the girl's arm on a hidden rubber bulb, after the manner of an atomizer.

Though only slightly affected, Chick soon pretended to yield. His head swayed unsteadily. He closed his eyes for a few seconds, then partly opened them, and assumed a dazed and vacant expression, muttering thickly.

"Shay, Mollie, whazzer mazzer?"

"Matter?" whispered Mollie. "Nothing's the matter. It's near midnight. You're getting sleepy."

"More'n sleepy. I'm getting dopy."

"No, only sleepy. I'm drowsy, too. Lean back and take a nap."

"Nap?"

"Sure. Rest your bean on the cushion. I'll wake you when I'm home. 'Twon't be long. Lean back."

Chick yielded to her, and sank back in the corner, muttering incoherently, and again closing his eyes. He saw that he was making no mistake in pretending to be thus affected, also that the girl did not even suspect his duplicity, and, after mumbling briefly and wabbling his head like one falling into a doze, he pretended to collapse completely and sink into absolute unconsciousness.

Mollie watched him for a few seconds, then lifted one of his hands and dropped it.

Chick let it fall like that of a dead man.

Then, starting up, Mollie Meagle thrust her head from the window, inhaling a long breath of the night air, and crying quickly:

"All right, Jerry, I've got him."

The chauffeur leaned over on his seat, replying gruffly:

"You've got him, eh?"

"Sure thing. He's dead to the world."

"Hadn't I better tie him up?"

"No need of it," Mollie insisted. "He's down and out for a half hour, at least. Knock-out drops ain't a marker, Jerry, for the stuff that old chemist can hand out. Hike along lively, and we'll get the infernal dick under cover. I'll give him another sniff now and then to make dead sure of him."

The girl drew back into the taxi, and kept a constant eye on the detective, at times repeating the process by which, plainly enough, she felt positive of having overcome him.

Chick Carter now knew that he had been recognized, also that his designs were probably suspected, if not definitely known, and he realized that the course he was shaping was fast becoming extremely hazardous. Many detectives would have shrunk from proceeding single-handed.

It was, indeed, like thrusting one's head into a lion's mouth. But Chick was determined to trace Luella Langham and identify her entire gang of abductors, neither of which could be accomplished by the immediate arrest of Mollie Meagle alone, and no thought of personal peril could have turned him from a course that promised to provide him with the information he wanted.

Constantly watched by the girl, Chick did not venture to lift an eyelid, even, and he could only vaguely determine the direction taken, or the whereabouts of the grim old house near which the taxi finally stopped.

There was no delay, moreover, enabling him to get a definite line on the surroundings. The chauffeur sprang down from his seat. Two other men instantly appeared like evil shadows out of the darkness. Three pairs of rough hands seized Chick by the legs and arms, and he was rudely hauled out of the taxi and lugged into the house, with Mollie Meagle closely following. The bang of the door when she closed and locked it fell with ominous import on the detective's ears.

The darkness within was dispelled by the approach of a tall, gaunt woman, with an oil lamp. She came from a brightly lighted kitchen, into which Chick was quickly carried and dropped upon the floor. Two of the men then hurriedly secured his legs and arms with stout leather straps, then tied him to a chair on which they roughly seated him.

All the while, having resolved to attempt no aggressive move before obtaining the information he wanted, Chick pretended to be unconscious. From a corner of his eye, nevertheless, he had identified the two men as members of the Tony Garcia gang—Derosa and Picconi.

The latter, gazing at the detective's closed eyes and hanging head after they had secured him, broke the brief silence by growling:

"You haven't croaked him, Moll, have you? That infernal stuff might kill him, you know."

"Kill nothing!" snapped Mollie. "You couldn't croak a Carter with anything but a cannon. He'll be all right in ten minutes, barring being in our clutches. He'll be as good as a dead one, all the same, when Tony sees him. Where's your man, Margot?"

"Gone with the launch to bring Jasper," said the gaunt woman, who had placed the lamp on a shelf.

"Tony and Gil with him?"

"Yes, both. They'll soon be back, I reckon."

"The sooner the better, now that we've got this dick."

"Did Rita put you wise?" questioned Derosa.

"Sure. How else could I have known him?"

"She said she'd find you. We saw him go into the theater with Nick and Garvan. We put Rita wise, and she went after you, sending us here to make ready for him, in case you got him. Is there anything else doing?"

"It's good enough for to-night that we've got this dick," declared Mollie. "I'll get rid of my tools, now, for the beastly gas gets in its work on me more or less. Give Jerry a drink, Margot, and then we'll bring the dick around and find out what Carter really knows about us."

Chick was considerably puzzled by some of the foregoing. He understood that Derosa and Picconi must have seen him at the theater, also that they had informed Rita Carvalli, but he could not fathom when or how the latter had informed Mollie Meagle of his identity.

Venturing a glance at her, he saw her take a rubber bag and bulb from inside of her loose waist, and then draw out a tiny tube that extended upward into her lace scarf, convincing him that he already had detected the nature of the contrivance employed for her infamous work. Just

what the rubber bag contained, however, could only be conjectured.

Glancing at the contrivance when she placed it on the shelf, Derosa said a bit grimly:

"It does the work, Moll, but it's mighty risky. How did you manage to force the gas to the woman's face in the theater?"

"With my fan," said Mollie. "I was sitting close to her. It don't take much, you know, and 'twould numb the brain of a brass monkey. The chemist who fixed the rig for me won't tell me what stuff the bag contains. He says he's the only one who knows the secret."

"It beats knock-out drops, Moll, as you said," remarked the chauffeur. "But it's whisky for mine, instead of that stuff."

"Give the dick a drink," repeated Mollie. "We'll find out what he can tell us."

Picconi hastened to obey.

Chick Carter wanted none of their bad whisky, however, so he abruptly raised his head and opened his eyes.

"Drink it yourself, you rat," said he. "I'll have none of it."

Mollie Meagle swung round like a flash.

"Oh, ho! You've been playing foxy," she cried. "You've been watching and listening, eh?"

"Well, I've seen and heard enough to give me a line on you rascals," Chick bluntly declared.

"And that's not all, mebbe," snapped Mollie. "Get his gatts, Derosa, and look to those straps. Make sure we don't lose the slippery devil."

CHAPTER VI.

TWO OF A KIND.

Patsy Garvan was not idle while Chick Carter was engaged as described.

Emerging from the back door of the theater on the mission Nick had assigned him, Patsy lost no time in returning to Broadway, where he at once began a stealthy hunt for any person whose conduct invited suspicion.

He was not long in finding two, instead of only one; a couple lurking in a doorway nearly opposite Nick's big gray touring car, with their attention evidently divided between that and the brightly lighted entrance to the theater.

Crossing the street, and walking briskly by them, Patsy obtained a furtive glance at their hangdog faces, both of whom he immediately recognized.

"Gee! That does settle it," he said to himself. "Frank Derosa and Tom Picconi, two of the Garcia gang. It's a cinch, now, that the chief is on the right trail. If we can only contrive to follow it—well, the rest should be easy, and the round-up sure. I'll hold up my end, all right, now that I've got my lamps on those two dagos, let come what may. Gee whiz! another has showed up already."

Patsy had returned across the street, and found a concealment from which he intended to stealthily watch the couple—now increased to a trio.

The new arrival was the same slender, dark-featured man seen a little later by Chick in conversation with Mollie Meagle in the concert hall.

Patsy continued to watch them. They were talking earnestly, with their gaze now directed upon the theater, now upon the waiting touring car in which Danny still was seated—all of which convinced Patsy that Nick, at least, had been seen and recognized when talking with Brady, the special policeman.

"The rascals got next, all right, and they may have seen Chick and me, too," he reasoned. "The chief directed me to lie low and shadow them, however, instead of reporting to him, and a good soldier always obeys orders. I'll wait until—ah, the chap in black is bolting. By Jove, I'll take a chance with that fellow."

The slender stranger then was hurrying diagonally across the street toward a public taxicab, which then was standing at the curbing some ten feet from where Patsy was lurking. Plainly enough, he was going to pass back of it in order to reach the sidewalk.

Knowing that his own disguise would prove effective, even though he was known by the other, Patsy resolved to have one good look at him at close range.

He stepped nearer to the taxicab, then timed himself to a nicety, and, as if in a great hurry among the throng of other pedestrians, he collided violently with the young man just as the latter came back of the taxicab and set foot upon the sidewalk.

"Oh, I beg pardon!" cried Patsy, clasping him with both arms to prevent his falling.

A hiss like that of a snake came from the other. A muttered oath followed it. A pair of fiery black eyes, blazing with anger, glaring into Patsy's for an instant, while his hands were fiercely thrust aside, and the lithe, sinuous figure eluded them.

"Beast! Devil! Are you blind?"

No more was said, or done. A hundred similar collisions occur daily in the thronged thoroughfares and crowded stores—but seldom one of like import.

For Patsy was given one of the surprises of his life. There could be no mistake as to the discovery he had made. He knew on the instant that he had clasped, not the wiry, muscular figure of a man—but the supple, yielding form of a woman.

Only one as finely trained as Nick Carter and his assistants could have suppressed a betrayal of so startling a discovery, with all that it instantly signified.

Not a sign of it appeared in Patsy's face, however. Without so much as a backward glance, he hurried on with the crowd, as if more annoyed by the brief delay than by the epithets applied to him.

Mentally, nevertheless, he was exclaiming:

"Rita Carvalli! Rita Carvalli in male attire, as sure as there's juice in a lemon. But she did not know me, nor must she suspect, or our game would be knocked on the head. I'll let her go, and stick to the others."

Patsy felt that he had no wise alternative—nor, indeed, had he.

For Rita Carvalli had leaped into the taxicab and hurriedly given the chauffeur her instructions:

"Union Square. Be quick about it."

In another moment the taxicab was speeding toward the nearest corner, and pursuit on Patsy's part would have been utterly futile.

There remained, however, the two men lurking in an opposite doorway, and to them Patsy again gave his entire attention.

They also left him only one course, moreover, that of tracking them elsewhere. For they waited only until the taxicab containing Rita Carvalli had disappeared around a corner, which huge conveyance had prevented their seeing her collision with Patsy, and they then

hastened to the nearest subway station and boarded a train to the Bronx.

Patsy shadowed them to one of the lowest sections on the water front. He nearly lost them when, turning into a narrow, gloomy, blind street that appeared to run straight in among a grim old wooden house and some low outbuildings, the latter partly hidden by a high board fence, both men disappeared for several moments in the darkness.

Crouching on one side of the muddy, unpaved street, however, Patsy presently saw a light appear in the house, and a moment later the door was opened by a gaunt, angular woman of masculine proportions, and both men disappeared with her into the house.

"I've run them to cover, by Jove, and now I'll find out what kind of a crib it is, and what's likely to be doing," thought Patsy. "It's barely possible that Luella Langham isn't a thousand miles from here. Gee! I'd give a year's income if I could find and rescue her single-handed."

Though feeling reasonably sure that his espionage was not suspected, Patsy proceeded with exceeding caution.

Under cover of the darkness, having made sure that the dismal street was deserted, he stole nearer the house, the front of which was again shrouded in gloom, and arrived at the board fence already mentioned.

He then discovered a gate on which a rudely lettered sign denoted that the tenant of the house and the low inclosed buildings near by was one George Russo, a builder and repairer of small boats.

Patsy read the sign, then tried the gate, and found it bolted within. Seeking that part of the fence farthest from the house, he drew himself up and looked over it.

A shop and shed in a gloomy, chip-strewn yard met his gaze. Beyond them was the river wall, with a narrow dock making in toward the farther side of the house, the most of which occupied a portion of the boat builder's yard.

One glance at the inferior surroundings and rundown buildings convinced Patsy that the place was occupied by a man of meager means and a barely profitable business.

"George Russo, eh?" thought he. "Some poor devil of an Italian who can hardly make both ends meet. That may be, perhaps, why he is in with some of the Garcia gang on this job. I'll look farther."

Patsy drew himself higher, then climbed noiselessly over the fence, and dropped into the yard. The ground was covered with loose chips and bits of wood, the breaking of one of which might betray him, and redoubled caution became imperative.

Stealing back of the shed and workshop, both of which were closed and locked, Patsy reached a point from which he could see the back of the house and the side near the narrow dock, or slip, already mentioned.

The house appeared much higher than in front, owing to the slope of the land toward the river. The rear foundation walls rose eight feet above the ground, evidently inclosing part of the cellar, for there were no windows and only a single heavy back door.

Above were the lighted windows of a rear room, presumably a kitchen, though the curtains were closely drawn. No light could be seen in any other part of the house.

"Twelve feet," muttered Patsy, gazing up at the lighted windows. "Out of reach except with a ladder. This don't look like a crib to be easily entered without being heard. As for overhearing anything, unless I can find a ladder, I might as well be over in Jersey."

All that Patsy could hear, in fact, was the swash and gurgle of the water among the huge rocks forming the river wall, and the occasional dull and distant bellow of some steam craft out of view in the lower bay. The restless river looked grim and black under the night sky. Only a myriad of lights in the far distance, as faint and feeble as fireflies, relieved the gloomy picture.

"I reckon I'd better tackle the front of the house," thought Patsy, after sizing up the rear. "It don't look good to me out here. I'll have a nearer look at the other side, however, before I scale that fence again and——"

Patsy broke off abruptly, quickly concealing himself in a narrow space between the shed and the shop. The shooting of heavy bolts had fallen upon his ears. A gleam of light had appeared under the basement door.

"Gee! There's going to be something doing out here, after all," he muttered. "I'd better stick round."

The heavy door swung open. The gaunt woman mentioned, carrying a smoky oil lamp in one hand, evidently was lighting Derosa and Picconi out of the house. The two men stepped into the yard.

Patsy caught sight of a dismal cellar, half filled with refuse and rubbish, but he could see nothing more distinctly in the feeble light and the brief time allowed him.

"Bolt the door again, Margot," commanded Derosa, glancing back at the woman. "We'll come round to the front when ready. We may nose round here until some one shows up."

"'Tain't time yet," the woman replied, in harsh, rasping tones. "Not before midnight."

"Mebbe not, but we'll have a look."

The woman closed the door. The clanking of the bolts followed. The light had disappeared, and darkness again prevailed. But the scene now was augmented by the two grim figures then sauntering nearer the wave-washed wall.

Patsy could see them distinctly in the starlight. They halted scarce twenty feet from his concealment, where they stood gazing vainly down the black sweep of the choppy river.

"D'ye know what time 'tis?" growled Picconi, after a moment.

"It's after 'leven, Tom, I'd say," returned Derosa.

"What d'ye think?"

"About what?"

"Will Rita find them?"

"Find them!" Derosa echoed derisively. "Let her alone for that. She'll wise them up, all right."

"And Mollie?"

"The whole shooting match. Trust her."

"But could Moll land either of them, if she run across him? She might throw a shoe."

"Moll Meagle isn't the kind that throws a shoe," said Derosa, with grim assurance. "She'll get him, Tom, with hands down."

"We've got to get the whole bunch, as far as that goes, or they'll get us," growled Picconi. "They've done it once, and they could do it again. I never breathe easy when I know that Nick Carter and his cursed kennel are after me. They are the worst dicks in the business."

"We'll get them this time," Derosa confidently predicted. "Tony is out with his gatts for both Carters, and also that cub who works with them. He'll get them, too."

"Get me, eh?" thought Patsy. "You rats may think so, but the getting will be on the other leg. I wonder who in thunder Mollie Meagle is after. She's Jasper Meagle's fly sister. I must get wise to just what's doing."

Patsy's hopes in that direction, however, were dashed almost immediately. For Picconi drew his coat around him and snarled:

"Let's duck this wind. It's cursed cold out here."

"We'll go round to the front," said Derosa, turning from the wall.

"That'll break it."

"But we must keep our lamps lit. Carter is just as likely to come nosing round here, as he was to have trailed the skirt to the theater."

"That's right, too."

"Hang me, Tom, if I can see how he did it."

"No one ever sees how Carter does things, blast him, until he gets the rings on his game," grumbled Picconi. "I'm a mutt, if I ever let him can me again. Not for mine, Derosa, if I have a rod on my hip."

"You're never without one," grinned Derosa, as they moved toward the house, and out of Patsy's hearing.

Patsy watched them until they disappeared around the corner. He knew they had no intention of immediately entering the house, however, and that constant caution was necessary. He waited in his concealment for a time, thinking the rascals might return, or that something would enable him to determine more definitely what was in the wind.

What Patsy at length heard, however, was not precisely what he was expecting. It was, in fact the chug of an automobile.

Stealing back to the shed, Patsy returned to the high fence which hid the dismal street from his view. Climbing up again, he cautiously peered over it.

He arrived only in time, however, to see the door closed upon several persons who had entered the house.

The taxi was standing where Mollie Meagle's chauffeur had left it.

"Gee! There is something doing for fair," Patsy muttered, dropping back into the yard. "There were three men, at least, in that bunch, and they were lugging something, or some one. The woman cannot be Rita Carvalli She's too big for her. Besides, according to what those rats said, she's out on other business.

"By Jove, I'm going to find a way to enter that house. I'll see what's going on in there let come what may."

CHAPTER VII.

TAKING CHANCES.

Patsy Garvan was not slow in acting upon the resolutions he had formed. Stealing back of the house again, bent upon inspecting the windows on the farther side, he presently made a discovery which until then had escaped his notice in the darkness. It consisted of a tall spar set in the ground near the wall flanking one side of the narrow dock. It evidently was used by Russo for raising masts for the purpose of stepping them in boats made fast alongside the wall.

The spar was about thirty feet in height, rising several feet above the projecting gutter and eaves of the French roofed house, and only about ten feet from them.

Extending from the top of the spar was an iron arm, or bracket, about four feet long. It ran parallel with the side wall of the house, as well as that of the dock.

Reeved through a block attached to the end of this iron arm was a double length of strong rope, evidently used for hoisting masts in order to step them.

Nailed to the spar was a string of cleats, that a man might easily ascend it in order to work near the top, while standing on a short joist fastened at right angles across it.

Patsy was quick to see how he could take advantage of all this. He drew back and measured the distance between the eaves and the top of the spar, and also noted the height of the spar above them.

"Gee! That ought to be easy sledding," he muttered. "It's no great shakes to swing ten feet with a rope. That would enable me to grasp the projecting gutter. The rest would be dead easy after getting a grasp in that. Upper windows are always safer and easier to enter than lower ones, and it's dollars to fried rings that none of the upper rooms are occupied. It's worth trying, by Jove, at all events."

In another moment, with his coat buttoned close around him, Patsy was climbing up the cleats and steadily mounting the tall, upright spar.

It was a stunt that would have tried the nerves of a novice, or one unaccustomed to athletic feats.

Patsy Garvan's nerves and muscles were like fibers of steel, however, and not for an instant did he falter. Not a thought of personal peril entered his head.

The wind whistled in fitful gusts around him. The spar swayed slightly under his weight. He steadily worked his way upward, nevertheless, until he could grasp the iron arm and place his feet on the strip of joist about four feet below.

There he paused to catch his breath and gaze around for a few seconds.

He then could look down on the pitch of the French roof, the upper windows, and the projection to which the gutter was attached.

The river looked like a black abyss far below him, with the outline of the narrow dock and wall only dimly discernible in the darkness.

Far away to the south, he could see a solitary light moving rapidly near the black water, evidently that of a small motor craft speeding over the choppy waves. Her outlines, however, were swallowed up in the darkness. He could not determine her size, nor where she was heading.

Patsy paused only briefly in contemplation of the grim picture.

He then drew one of the dangling ropes toward him and made it fast to the spar, that it might not hang in his way.

Drawing up the other until only enough remained to serve his purpose, he tied the bight around the end of the projecting arm, and made the slack fast to the spar.

Patsy then had a single rope dangling about fifteen feet from the end of the iron arm.

"That's long enough," he muttered. "It's not more than nine feet to the gutter. If I can't swing that distance and hook on without a slip, I'd better chuck up gym work and take on marbles and croquet. Here goes, by Jove, let come what may."

Descending several of the cleats until he could grasp the rope at a point which he knew would enable him to swing

as far and high as the gutter, Patsy took a firm grip on the rope and obtained his first impulse from the spar.

In another moment he was swinging to and fro from the projecting arm, a living pendulum, working for dear life to increase the arc he described, momentarily swinging farther and farther from side to side, higher and higher each instant, and all the while with his gaze fixed upon the line of gutter he was striving to reach.

Such strenuous feats cannot be of long duration. With each upward swing toward the house, he came nearer the desired point. Within half a minute his head and shoulders rose level with it, and so near that he almost touched it.

"The next time," he muttered, as he swung far back, and then gave himself additional impetus. "This time, by Jove, and may that gutter be as strong as it looks!"

Patsy realized, of course, that he was taking a long chance. He was as cool, however, as if performing a feat with swinging rings in a gymnasium.

As he surged upward toward the gutter, he measured the rapidly decreasing distance with his eye. He did not falter, nor did he hurry. He waited till he reached the height of his swing, and was on the point of descending —that point where the force of gravity is inoperative for an instant, when weight becomes imperceptible.

The gutter was within a foot of Patsy's head and shoulder—and he grasped it on the instant, dropping the rope.

It creaked slightly, giving him a momentary chill, and then it held firm, and he hung fast with both hands, while the relinquished rope swayed to and fro near the tall gray spar ten feet away.

Now feeling sure of himself, Patsy worked one arm and leg over the edge of the gutter, then turned himself upward, and succeeded in grasping the casing of an attic window. In another moment he was perched on the broad sill.

"Gee! That's going some," he muttered, pausing for breath. "I wouldn't like that stunt for a steady diet. Once in a while is all right, when necessary, but not the regular thing for mine. Now to find out where I'm at, and what I'm up against."

Patsy turned with the last, fishing out his searchlight, and examined the window. He found it unlocked, and a beam of light revealed a cheaply furnished bedroom, unoccupied, and an open door leading into a narrow hall.

Patsy raised the window noiselessly and stepped into the room. Stealing into the hall, he listened at the head of a narrow stairway.

Not a sound came from below. From some near quarter, however, there suddenly fell upon his ears—a low, distressful moan.

"By thunder, I've found her!"

The triumphant exclamation flashed through Patsy's mind the moment he heard the moan. He knew from whom it must have come. He felt sure that he had found the house to which Luella Langham had been brought. Turning back, he discovered a closed door secured with a padlock.

"She's confined in that room, by Jove, as sure as death and taxes," he muttered, while he examined the lock. "I can pick this thing and release her, all right, but can I get out of the house with her? I'd better find out, to begin with, just what chances must be taken. It will be wiser to lie low and wait for a good opportunity, than to risk a slip-up at this stage of the game."

Retracing his steps, Patsy crept down the stairs to the floor below. He then could see a dim light in the lower hall. Voices reached his ears, and presently one that gave him a surprise.

"Great Scott!" he murmured. "That's Chick's voice. How the deuce came he here? It must be—yes, by Jove, he was brought here in that taxi. He was the burden the three men were lugging into the house."

It was just then that Chick Carter, casting subterfuge to the winds, was refusing to drink the whisky Picconi attempted to give him, while Mollie Meagle was fiercely directing Derosa to get Chick's revolvers and tighten his bonds.

Patsy waited to hear no more, though the bang of a closed door, followed by hurried steps through a basement hall, vaguely reached his ears. He felt sure that he had cornered the gang, discovered the abducted woman, and that Chick was in need of assistance—and these were enough to spur Patsy to immediate aggressive action.

Quickly shifting a revolver to each side pocket, he started down the stairs—only to meet with a mishap no mortal man could have anticipated.

The stairs were not carpeted. The third from the top was decayed, and the narrow, overhanging board that formed the step was loose, with its rusted nails gone long before.

As he stepped on it, the board tipped quickly, and, like a flash, Patsy lost his footing.

He grasped wildly at the baluster rail, but missed it.

In another instant he was plunging, feet first, and at top speed, down the stairs, as helpless as if shooting a toboggan slide.

He fell in a heap in the lower hall, slightly stunned, and, in another moment, Picconi, Derosa, and others—he could not at once determine how many more—were pouncing upon him like terriers on a rat.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE YELLOW COUPON.

Like those of the "Heathen Chinee," the ways of the modern up-to-date detective are sometimes peculiar. Acumen, foresight, and subterfuge, a perception of how advantages may be obtained, combined with the skill and patience to prepare for and await the fateful opportunity, are as essential to the one as to the other.

Nick Carter had more than one reason for selecting for himself the most delicate and hazardous part of the work to be undertaken that night, that of seeking and sounding some of the known members of the Tony Garcia gang, from any of whom he knew that information could be obtained only with extraordinary cunning, or with a corkscrew.

For the first law of gangland is never to squeal. A squealer, or snitch, as he is termed in gangese nomenclature, not only is the abhorred of the abhorred, but he also becomes a reptile marked for sure and speedy slaughter.

Nor is this the only law peculiar to gangland. Its sanguinary precincts are nothing, if not democratic. Recognition does not, as in certain exclusive portions of the upper crust, depend upon a preponderance of indigo blood and a pedigree a mile long. Glory in gangland is

born of lead and steel. No one ventures to compel an aspirant to social distinction to disclose his lineage, or to reveal the story of his past life—that is, he thus ventures only once.

Witness, for example, the cometlike career of Darby Nixon, whose monaker, Nailer Nixon, was bestowed upon him for no other reason than his fiery resentment of that same inquisitive indiscretion, gangland always being apt with a title.

No one knew who Darby Nixon really was, nor where he came from, or where he went, when he selected to frequently disappear for indefinite periods, or to show up in divers disreputable dives for an extremely limited time. He had shot into the East Side firmament about two years before, and, though viewed askance by many during his occasional brief visits, there was always a warning gleam in the eyes with which he met inquisitive stares. It was sufficient to silence tongues that seldom went bridled.

Swagger Flynn was the first to ignore this mute warning—and, incidentally, the last.

Flynn was himself a bad egg, a nut to be cracked only with a sledge hammer. He enjoyed the distinction of never having been licked, and he had acquired recent glory by having cleaned out a Harlem dive singlehanded, with no other weapons than the fists, feet, and teeth nature had given him.

Flushed with this exploit, and egged on by five cronies whose valorous support could be relied upon, if needed, Swagger Flynn walked into Steve Mullen's saloon, in Second Avenue, one night, and sailed in to settle the much-mooted question of Darby Nixon's identity, and where Darby Nixon came from.

This apple of discord happened to be taking a lone drink at the bar, a most unusual occurrence, in so far as the solitaire part of it was concerned. He turned and eyed Flynn with silent contempt for several moments, when the latter, backed with his five henchmen, opened with a broadside of impertinent questions.

Nixon finally set down his glass, however, and inquired with icy composure:

"Did you blow in here, Flynn, lookin' for trouble?"

"Nix!" Flynn vouchsafed, fiery-eyed. "I'm lookin' fur youse, to find out who the devil you are, and——"

"Stop a bit," said Nixon, arm still on the bar. "You chase yourself out, Flynn, or I'll fire you out."

"Fire me out—youse? I guess not!"

Incidentally, of course, Flynn reached for his hip pocket.

That was the way it began—and it ended in precisely three minutes.

Flynn had a broken jaw and a fractured skull, when they picked him up.

One of his loyal supporters had a broken arm.

Two of them were gathered up unconscious from the gutter outside.

The other two pulled themselves together on the floor in opposite corners of the barroom.

Mr. Darby Nixon complacently viewed all this devastation while he finished his drink.

And from that day he became Nailer Nixon, and whenever or wherever he chose to show up, he was received with respect merging into servility. The most valiant gangster did deem it unwise to oppose the Nailer.

It was short of half past ten when this same swarthy, sinister-eyed individual, after having tracked a man from the Bowery, paused to watch him through the dusty window of an inferior barroom in lower Broome Street.

The subject of this espionage then was buying a drink at the sloppy bar. When about to pay for it, he dug out a wad of bills from his fob pocket, and he inadvertently drew out with them a small square piece of pasteboard, which fluttered to the floor.

It was seen only by the man outside. He observed it with a sharper gleam leaping up in his eyes, and he at once pushed open the swinging doors and entered the dingy barroom.

"Perdition! Here's Nailer Nixon!" muttered Doyle, a bartender then serving the man who had first entered. "I'd sooner see the devil."

Half a score of loafers in the dive sat up and took notice, and two of them edged nearer the door.

Nailer Nixon appeared oblivious to them. He swaggered to the bar, nodding a bit grimly, and saying:

"Howdy, Doyle? Push the booze. Hello, Meagle; I've been looking for you."

"Looking for me, Nailer?" questioned Jasper Meagle, turning with apprehensive scrutiny.

"That's what," replied Nixon. "Fire your ball and repeat. Fetch 'em into the back room, Doyle, where me and Meagle can have a bit of a spiel. He's got something he wants to tell me."

While he thus delivered his dictum, with the air of a man who was prepared to brook no opposition, Nixon dropped his handkerchief to the floor. When he picked it up, he also held concealed in the palm of his hand the scrap of yellow pasteboard mentioned. He glanced at it stealthily while he took up the drink he had ordered.

It was a coupon torn from a theater ticket.

It was the coupon for—the seat next to that occupied by Luella Langham in the Hyperion Theater that afternoon.

Nixon slipped it into his pocket. Then, with a toss of his head, he signed for Meagle to accompany him into a small back room, in which several cheap wooden chairs were placed around a bare, begrimed table.

Not until the two men were seated, however, with the drinks between them which Doyle had provided, was Meagle's apprehensive curiosity relieved.

Nixon began with placing his puissant fists on the table and fixing his aggressive eyes on his companion's face.

"Now, Meagle, wise me up," said he, as if the other had no alternative. "What was the matter with her?"

"Matter with her?" echoed Meagle, staring. "Matter with whom?"

"The skirt."

"What d'ye mean, Nailer? What skirt?"

"You dunno, eh?"

"I don't, Nailer, on the dead."

"On the dead, then, you do," said Nixon, with an ominous growl. "Cut out the don't-know guff, now, and hand me the real stuff—or you'll wish you had."

"But——"

"There ain't any buts," snarled Nixon, interrupting. "I piped you in the theater, Meagle, and piped you coming out."

"Oh, you mean this afternoon, Nailer," cried Meagle, pretending to brighten up, and see at what the other was driving.

"That's what. Your memory ought to go back that far."

"I was there—sure thing! You saw us, eh? That was me sister, Nixon, me sister Mollie. You know her, mebbe."

"Know her, mebbe, is right," Nixon allowed, with a threatening snarl. "But I don't mean the blondie. I mean the other one, the skirt in gray. What was the matter with her? Was she doped?"

"Doped nothing!" Meagle protested, feeling that evasions were proving futile. "She was all right. She's one of Mollie's pals, who lives——"

The Nailer checked him with a look and gesture that meant infinitely more than words could express.

"You're a liar, Meagle, and that goes," said he. "I knew the skirt the minute my lamps lit on her. She's a sister to that swell Langham stiff, who was wanted for bumping off Tom Carvalli a year or so ago."

"Careful, Nailer! Not too loud."

"Loud be hanged!" snarled Nixon. "I knew her all right, and I know she was doped. I don't need you to wise me up."

"But——"

"Dry up till I've had my say. You and Mollie got her, along with some of the Tony Garcia push, and you're going to bleed her for a wad of dough. That's the game and the gang. Now, hark you, Meagle, and make sure you get me. I'm no snitch, but what I say goes."

"I know that, Nailer—I know that."

"I'm down to my uppers, and must have some coin," Nixon went on, with suppressed ferocity. "I'm in with you in this skirt game, and that settles it."

"In with us?"

"That's what. I'll do my part from now on, mind you, but I'm going to have an even break with the rest of the gang when we get the graft. Is that plain enough, or must I drive it into you with a club? D'ye get me?"

Meagle's hangdog face now wore a look of dismay. He had an awe-inspiring dread of opposing the Nailer, and while he did not fear that he would expose the game and the gang, and would have been personally willing to submit to his very businesslike proposition, and thus avoid trouble, Meagle did not see how such servile submission could be explained to the satisfaction of his confederates. His voice went husky when he replied.

"Sure thing, Nailer, I get you," said he. "But——"

"Cut out the buts. There ain't any," snarled Nixon, with blood in his eye. "This goes, Meagle, or some one is going to get bumped. I'm in the game—or you'll be a dead one!"

"How can I fix it with the gang?" faltered Meagle, milky around his ears.

"That's easy."

"How? What spiel can I give 'em?"

"Tell them I wised you up that the Carters are after them. It's most likely true, too, for I saw Nick Carter himself leaving the Hyperion only an hour ago."

"The devil you say!" gasped Meagle.

"Devil is right," said Nixon. "But the Carters can be bumped off as well as any others. D'ye get me? I'm in, now, ain't I?"

Meagle no longer demurred. This looked to him by far the easiest way out of a most painfully threatening situation.

He brightened up wondrously.

He nodded and lurched nearer the table.

He thrust his arm across it to eagerly shake hands with —Nick Carter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST CALL.

It is quite needless to say that Jasper Meagle did not realize that he was shaking hands with—Nick Carter.

It was an entirely original scheme, and one that had, in reality, taken comparatively little of his time—that of assuming at intervals the fictitious character depicted, in order to more easily pick up desired information in certain close-mouthed precincts of the city, or to perpetrate some such profitable subterfuge as then was engaging him.

It now is obvious, of course, why Nick had selected this part of the work to be done that night.

Locating Jasper Meagle in the Bowery, and knowing him to be one of the Garcia gang, Nick no sooner saw the yellow coupon fall from the rascal's pocket, than he knew just what part the scamp had played in the knavish game, and also that he then had the case well in hand.

Still maintaining the grim part that was serving him so effectively, Nick shook Meagle's hand and growled approvingly:

"That's more like it. You'll quit no loser, Meagle, in having me for a pal."

"Mighty well I know that, Nailer," Meagle roundly declared. "But the true reason must be between us. Never give it out to the gang."

"There's none of the snitch in me."

"I'll fix it for you in the way you've said, and that can be done all right."

"Like rolling off a log."

"I'll do it when Tony shows up, too, and——"

"Shows up where?"

"Right here."

"To-night?"

"Any minute," said Meagle.

"Good. I'll wait."

"I'm here to meet him," added Meagle, waxing confidential. "He's to take me to the house of his friend, where he's been lying low since he gave the bulls the slip after Carter got him and the whole gang that night in Forsyth Street."

"I remember," put in Nick.

"Sure you do."

"Sure I do is right. Who's the friend? Give it to me straight, Meagle."

"His name is Russo."

"And he hangs out?"

"Up Harlem way. He repairs boats, but is down on bed rock. He was glad to take on any job for a bit of coin. Garcia knew him in Italy. They're old pals."

"But what has been done with the skirt?" Nick asked.

"She's there, too."

"In Russo's house?"

"Yes. She was doped all right, as you guessed, and—wait a bit! Here they come."

Three men then striding through the barroom had caught Meagle's eye through the partly open door. They came straight to the back room without pausing, and though one was carefully disguised, and all three clad

in seaman's garb, and wet with salty spray, Nick instantly recognized two of them.

One was Tony Garcia, wanted for the Carvalli murder. Another was Gilman Hart, a confederate in the crime. The third was George Russo, whose house was the scene of episodes already described, but at that moment in progress.

Tony Garcia drew back and stared, scowling darkly, when he saw the supposed Nailer Nixon in the room. But Meagle at once hastened to explain—as Nick had directed.

Garcia heard him in grim silence, but his frown had vanished when Meagle ended his explanation. Like the latter, he took the easiest way to meet the situation. He shook hands with Nick, saying forcibly through his thick black disguise:

"It's all right, Nailer, since you got next to the game and wised up Meagle so friendlylike."

"What else would a white man do?"

"Nothing else, Nailer, for fair. You're one of us from now on, and we'll share alike in what we can get from the skirt."

"That suits me all right," replied Nick, with repeated nods of approval. "You can bank on me to do my part."

"I know that, pal," said Garcia. "We'll all pull together. Shake with Gil Hart and Dod Russo. We're down from Harlem in Dod's launch. I'm not taking chances in subway trains, nor along the Bowery. You'll go back with us, mebbe."

"That's just what I'll do," assented Nick promptly.

"You're sure 'twas that dick, Carter, who came out of the theater?"

"Dead sure," Nick nodded. "I know him as well as I know myself."

"We must get him, then, or he'll be getting us," Garcia snarled through his beard. "How could he have struck our trail, Jasper?"

"I'll be hanged if I know."

"What matters how?" demanded Nick, with sinister contempt. "There's only one move to make, if he threatens us. Hand him a chunk of lead, or slip a cheese knife into him."

"I'd do it quick enough, if the way was open."

"If 'tain't open, it's up to us to open it."

"That listens good to me," declared Garcia approvingly. "You're all right, Nailer, and—*sapristi!* Here's Rita."

The girl had approached unobserved through the smoky dive, and quickly entered the back room. She still was clad as when Chick and Patsy had seen her, and her manifest haste and dilated black eyes denoted that she was the bearer of important information.

Naturally, of course, it corroborated what Nick already had stated—a fact that clinched the favorable impression that he had made upon Garcia and Jasper Meagle.

"It's lucky I've found you so quickly," she said, addressing Garcia after he had introduced Nick and explained their relations.

"Why lucky?" he inquired.

"You must hike back to the crib."

"For what?"

"The Carters have struck our trail. They were seen by Derosa and Picconi at the theater to-night."

"That's no news. The Nailer saw them and put us wise."

"But that's not all."

"Something more?"

"You bet!" Rita viciously asserted. "I get the tip from them, and then hiked down to a concert hall to wise up Mollie, where I had agreed to meet her. I was waiting outside, not seeing her for a time, and I happened to pipe a man looking through the window. I watched him till he entered, and later I saw him stealthily watching Mollie."

"Not Nick Carter?" gasped Meagle inquiringly.

"No, not Nick, but Chick Carter."

"Perdition!" muttered Garcia. "Did he pull her?"

"Not a pull," snapped Rita. "He was in disguise, but I knew him. I went in and wised up Mollie, and told her she must get him. She had the tools, all right, and I had time to bring Jerry Dakin round the corner with his chug wagon. I put him wise to what was wanted."

"But the dick—what about him?"

"Mollie felt sure she could land him, and I reckon she has made good," Rita rapidly continued. "I saw Jerry carting both of them away to Russo's crib, where I had sent Derosa and Picconi to receive them. It's dollars to a little piece of cheese, Tony, that they have got Chick Carter in the toils by this time."

"Bully for Mollie," said Nick, with grim commendation. "That will be one of the infernal sleuths, at least, who can be wiped out."

"And that's why, Tony, you'd better hike back to the crib," added Rita. "I'm ready, now, to go with you."

"Count me in, too," cried Nick, with an egaerness none rightly appreciated.

Tony Garcia already was upon his feet, his evil eyes aglow with vengefuly exultation.

"We'll go at once," he cried. "There's room for all in Russo's launch."

"Where is she?" asked Nick.

"In a slip, three minutes' walk from here."

"Get a move on, then."

"We can make Russo's place in half an hour."

"The quicker, Tony, the better," urged Rita.

"That's right, too," said Nick.

The rascals could not, now, move too quickly to serve his own covert purpose.

They trooped out to the street and down to the slip, all hands, and in less than ten minutes the low black launch containing them was speeding toward her destination.

It was her moving light, then scarce three hundred yards away, that Patsy Garvan saw from the top of the spar a half hour later.

A very few minutes then brought the craft into the slip adjoining Russo's yard.

He lingered briefly to make her fast to the wall.

Gil Hart ran around to the front door, then hastened down to admit all hands through the basement.

They trooped in hurriedly, Nick among them, with a revolver shifted to each side pocket, and all were mounting the cellar stairs leading up to the lower hall—just as Patsy Garvan slipped on the stairway above and tobogganed down to meet them, or so it almost seemed.

The scenes that immediately followed were of brief duration.

"What's that?" roared Garcia, bounding up the stairs.

"Something fell," cried Nick.

Shouts of alarm broke from Derosa and Picconi, while they rushed out of the near kitchen, in which Chick then

sat tied to a chair, while the chauffeur and Russo's wife stood nonplused by the sudden swelling uproar.

Followed by Meagle, Russo, and Rita Carvalli, Nick Carter reached the hall close upon the heels of Tony Garcia, and just as Derosa and Picconi pounced upon the prostrate Patsy, who had not had time to scramble to his feet.

Nick saw him distinctly, however, and on the instant was equal to the situation. With a sweep of both arms, he forced several of the gang into the kitchen, at the same time shouting fiercely:

"He's one of Carter's push. Look out for his guns, you fellows. Into the kitchen, all of you, and leave the whelp to me. I'll get him—I'll get him!"

Before the last was fairly uttered, amid such confusion that none scarce knew where he stood, Nick had seized Derosa and Picconi by their necks and hurled them into the kitchen—thus bringing the entire gang within the confines of the brightly lighted room.

Nick had Patsy upon his feet the next instant, adding quickly:

"Guns out, Patsy, and shoot to kill. Follow me."

"Gee whiz! It's the chief," gasped Patsy, whipping out both of his revolvers.

When Nick Carter swung round and strode into the room, his disguise had for the most part disappeared, and his revolvers were out and leveled. The entire episode had taken less than thirty seconds.

"Now, then, hands up!" he shouted. "I'll drop the first crook who reaches for a gun."

"And if he don't, I will," yelled Patsy. "We've got you covered."

The scream that came from Rita Carvalli was like that of a maniac.

"Devils!" she shrieked. "It's Nick Carter."

Tony Garcia uttered the roar of a tortured bull, and, ignoring the detective's warning, reached for his revolver.

Nick fired on the instant, and dropped him with a bullet through his lungs.

That one shot was enough to quell all of the others. The hands of one and all went into the air as if under the same impulse.

Tony Garcia had fallen in a crumpled heap on the floor, however, bleeding from a wound that speedily proved fatal. It was a fate any man would have chosen who stood in the grim shadow of the electric chair.

There was nothing more of a sensational nature that had to be done. To liberate Chick, summon the police, secure the entire gang, and start them on their way to jail, and ultimately to the punishment prescribed by the law—all this required only a short time.

In the meantime, however, Nick and Patsy forced open the attic room and found Luella Langham, bound, gagged, and secured to a bed, but otherwise none the worse for her terrible experience. Her relief and gratitude upon beholding the detective's familiar face may be far more easily imagined than described. She could tell no more about her strange condition in the theater, however, of which she had only a vague recollection, nor about the cause of it, than already has been set forth.

It was one o'clock that night, less than eight hours after the daring abduction, when Nick and his assistants accompanied Luella Langham to her home, where her brother and lover were waiting to receive them, both having been informed by telephone of the rescue. Their demonstrations of gratitude and joy scarce knew bounds.

"By Jove, I can hardly realize it, Nick," said Phil Langham, when the excitement began to subside. "Starting with nothing, with not a smitch of evidence, not even the shadow of a clue, in eight hours you have rounded up this gang, rescued Luella, and restored her to her home. On my word, Nick, I'm completely staggered. You're a wonder, the eighth wonder of the world, and none can deny it."

"Well, it was a short trail, Phil, I admit," said Nick modestly.

"The shortest on record, chief, for fair," declared Patsy. "Gee! But it led to a glorious finish. Garcia down and out, and his gang canned for a term of years. That's good enough for one night."

"It's the limit," said Chick tersely.

"It does not appear that Gid Preston figured in the affair, Nick, does it?" questioned Floyd, a bit anxiously.

"No, nor did he," said Nick.

"I wish he could have been rounded up with the others."

"His time will come, Floyd," replied Nick confidently. "It's not easy to say just when, or how, but it will surely come. Take it from me—we shall hear again from Gid Preston."

THE END.

Nick Carter's predictions almost invariably proved to be correct—and that this one to Chick was no exception, you will find by reading, in the next issue of this weekly, No. 87, out May 9th, the story entitled "In the Toils; or, Nick Carter's Peril." The story is full of dramatic situations, and is of absorbing interest.

Inspector Watts' Great Capture;

Or, The Case of Alvord, the Embezzler.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEDUCTIONS OF CHIEF INSPECTOR WATTS.

It was nearly ten o'clock that Thursday evening, a dull, damp, disagreeable night. The multitude of people usually thronging the chief thoroughfare at this hour was thinned down by the chill and the dampness. The electric lights glowed with a halo through the mist and fog, and the atmosphere wore a yellow haze.

Yet there were more carriages than usual rattling and rumbling over the city pavements. It is an ill wind, indeed, that blows a cabman no good. Their vehicles stood in long lines before the brilliant entrances to the theaters, and fairly blocked the crossings in the immediate neighborhood of the railway stations.

One of these left the Southern Union soon after half past nine, and, at a rate of speed indicating matters of serious moment, tore through Summer and Winter Streets, and thence to Pemberton Square.

Before quarter of ten it had drawn up under the frown of the new courthouse and the grim headquarters building, and at the office of the inspector of police.

Without waiting the service of the cabman, Sheridan

Keene opened the carriage door and sprang down to the sidewalk, closely followed by a quick, energetic man in civilian dress and a topcoat.

This man was the detective sent from the central office in New York by Captain George McClusky.

"Wait here, driver! We shall want you presently!" Sheridan Keene said sharply. "This way, Detective Tinker. We shall find Chief Watts awaiting us."

And he led the way down the stairs, and straight through the corridor to the chief's private office.

As Detective Keene had predicted, they found Chief Watts at his desk and alone, where he had been for hour after hour, his mind concentrated upon operations already ably directed, and upon the greater and more delicate work he instinctively felt was before him. Yet no sign of weariness was in his resolute face, and the eyes were bright that greeted with an eager smile the New York officer.

"How are you, Detective Tinker!" he exclaimed, springing up to warmly shake the latter's hand.

"How are you, Chief Watts? I'm glad to see you."

"Thanks! And I am glad that you're here. Take this chair. Stay. Detective Keene! Did you bid the cabman wait?"

"Yes, chief."

"Remain with us. We'll presently visit the Touraine. I first want a brief talk with Detective Tinker. Close both doors, please."

For the first time since the inception of this great case, and the inauguration of a search which, if successful, would save the expenditure of thousands of dollars, the voice and manner of Chief Watts betrayed momentary nervousness and excitement.

He dropped back in his chair, resting both hands upon the arm nearest the seat occupied by Detective Tinker, and his face assumed a steady, studious expression.

"We'll presently visit the Touraine, Detective Tinker," he repeated. "No doubt, with your knowledge of Alvord, we can satisfy ourselves as to whether he has really been there."

"I think so, chief."

"There is no special haste about it, however, for I am already certain that he is not there now. So, before we leave, I would like to ask you something about Alvord's movements in New York, if you have no objection."

"Surely not, Chief Watts!" said Detective Tinker heartily.

"By the way, Detective Tinker," asked Inspector Watts, "do you know just when it is safe to assume that Alvord was last seen in New York City?"

The searching scrutiny to which he was being subjected, as if back of it existed some purpose not easily surmised, led Detective Tinker to hesitate for a moment, and weigh his answer with caution.

"Well, Chief Watts," he presently rejoined, "it is reasonably certain that Alvord was seen some day last week, subsequent to his leaving the bank for the last time. He called upon Lawyer Jacob F. Miller, and retained him as counsel."

"Does Miller state the precise day?"

"I cannot say. He states, however, that Alvord called at his law office to consult him upon this matter, and that he was engaged as counsel."

"Do you know if Alvord was seen at his home after Friday evening last?"

It was then that Detective Keene had seen him in the carriage with Greenleaf; but Chief Watts now was seeking information, not imparting it.

"It is not positively established when he was last at home. He has always been a lavish entertainer, and it is known that invitations were out for a large dinner party on the seventeenth. But on that very day the invitations were recalled by a messenger, and that night the house was closed and in darkness. Further inquiry has revealed that Alvord was next day reported to be ill, to friends that called."

"Were any of the callers admitted to the house, or did any of them see Alvord?"

"None have been found," replied Detective Tinker, shaking his head. "It was said by some of the neighbors, after the defalcation was published, that he had left town on the seventeenth, and embarked for South America. But this is not corroborated."

"Nor will it be, to my way of thinking," said Chief Watts shortly.

"Since Tuesday afternoon detectives have been watching the Alvord residence," continued Detective Tinker. "It was thought at one time that evening that Alvord had returned home."

"Why so?"

"A closed carriage was driven rapidly up to the house, and a man of Alvord's bulky figure was seen to hurriedly enter the vestibule. The outside doors, which had been closed and secured all day, were opened for him before the carriage had fairly come to a stop."

"Indicating that the man was expected!"

"Precisely, chief!" nodded Detective Tinker. "Immediately after, several of the rooms were lighted, and there appeared to be some excitement in the house. Then the lights suddenly went out, about a quarter hour later."

"Did the man who had entered come alone in the carriage?"

"No, he did not. He had two companions, a man and a woman. After he was safely in the house, the carriage was driven around the square and back to the Alvord door. It waited barely a few seconds, then started rapidly away and did not return."

"Nor take away the passenger who had entered the house?"

"No, sir."

"Were there any inquiries made at the house by the detectives?"

"An attempt was made, but repeated rings at the door-bell brought no response."

"And the identity of the man who entered?"

"Cannot be established."

"Nor that of his companions in the carriage?"

"Neither, chief," replied Detective Tinker; yet both Chief Watts and Detective Keene decided the man was Greenleaf, upon some mission for Alvord.

"Where is Mrs. Alvord?"

"She was at home until this morning, when she came into New York with the expressed intention of remaining. The Pinkerton men make it rather unpleasant for her at Mount Vernon."

"Do you know if she and Lawyer Miller have had any conferences?"

"Several. Both Miller, and his partner, Mr. Decker, were at the Alvord house all of Tuesday night. Decker and Mrs. Alvord went into town from Pelham the following morning, and Miller went from Mount Vernon on the eight-thirty train."

"Can't the detectives learn anything from the servants?"

"The coachman, Barney, is about the only one accessible, and he's as close-mouthed as an oyster. He did drop the remark, though, that Alvord had no idea of running away."

"Ah, is that so?"

"The opinion about there, and among Alvord's friends, in fact, is that he is not far away and can be reached if wanted."

"Yes?"

"And there is no doubt in my mind that the bank officers are making strenuous efforts to secure a restitution," added Detective Tinker.

"Do you know whether any considerable sum has been located, which the bank people are making these efforts to recover?"

"I know only what comes from the office of Peabody, Baker & Peabody, who have entire charge of the civil and criminal action against Alvord."

"And what do they say?"

"That while no inventory has been made, a rough estimate of Alvord's personal effects, household goods and jewelry, would be about two hundred thousand dollars. It is likely to fall short of that, however."

"Do they make no statement concerning Alvord's continued absence?" demanded Chief Watts, with a slight frown betraying his censorious sentiments.

"They deny having any knowledge of his whereabouts, and claim that, if they could locate him, his arrest should immediately follow. I think they are perfectly honest in this statement, though one of them is inclined to believe that Alvord has left the country."

"And that is the belief of a lawyer, a man presumably an analyst and logician!" exclaimed Chief Watts, in accents so derisive that Sheridan Keene, who well knew the characteristics of the speaker, instantly realized that he was about to state his own belief.

And the younger detective, always ready to profit from observation of the methods of his able superior, quietly drew nearer.

"I am rather surprised at that!" Chief Watts continued, drawing up his portly figure in his chair. "Why, Detective Tinker, there is absolutely no evidence whatever that Alvord has left the country, save alone that of his sudden disappearance and its analogy to like cases. But hundreds of men temporarily disappear in the course of a year, yet not necessarily from the country."

"That is true, Chief Watts," admitted the detective.

"On the other hand, gentlemen, there is the strongest kind of evidence that Alvord not only has not resorted to distant flight, but that he really has had no intention of so doing," Chief Watts warmly argued. "In cases of this kind there is one feature that is too generally overlooked, yet its significance is of the greatest consequence."

"What feature is that, chief?" asked Keene.

"The conduct of the criminal himself, as indicating the probable plans he carries in mind!" Chief Watts declared, with emphasis.

"Just review some of the features in the case, and see for yourselves to what they point," he continued, with a flush steadily deepening in his florid cheeks.

"Alvord left the bank on the eighteenth, and for five days after, until the twenty-third, when his defalcation was made public, he is reported to have been ill at home. Never mind whether that is true or not! We know that up to the seventeenth, when his dinner invitations were recalled, he certainly had no plan for immediate departure. It is a hundred to one that, on the eighteenth, he observed something at the bank which led him to anticipate speedy exposure, and to leave the bank for good."

"By gracious, Chief Wattts, I believe you are right!" exclaimed Detective Tinker.

"Now what follows? It doesn't matter just where he was during the next five days. Of one fact we are reasonably sure; that he called upon Lawyer Miller, with whom he discussed his situation, and whom he retained as counsel."

"Yes!"

"Were those the acts of a man seriously contemplating flight from the country?" demanded the chief, with forcible earnestness. "Not at all! Positively the contrary! The embezzler who really intends to abscond, and to flee the country, does not wait to consult an attorney. He consults a shipping list instead! He packs his grip the instant he suspects himself exposed, and takes the first outbound steamship. Did Alvord do this? Not at all!"

"But, chief——"

"Wait one moment! Now, again! Why did Alvord consult Lawyer Miller? Was it to learn if there was any way by which he could evade arrest? No! His own common sense would have informed him to the contrary. Was it with a hope of evading prosecution, in event of a partial restitution?"

"Possibly——"

"No, sir. Alvord's expensive living, his expenditures at Saratoga, the evidence of his habit of speculation, all go to show that he has little or nothing to restore. It was not for that that he consulted Miller."

"I guess you are right!"

"Now, again! Did he hope to secure through Miller the assistance of friends? Not at all! No sane man, short in his accounts three-quarters of a million of dollars, would think for an instant of asking the help of friends. It would be absurd, farcical even! He had no such motive!"

"Yet he must have had a motive," cried Detective Tinker, irresistibly moved by the forcible logic with which Chief Watts was depicting the case.

"To be sure he had!" exclaimed the chief, with a quick nod. "And the most likely one is, that he aimed not only to protect his wife's interest in their personal estate, but also to prepare the way, prior to his arrest, for such operations and advice on the part of his counsel as would be most to the advantage of both his wife and himself after his apprehension.

"Mark my words, gentlemen!" concluded Chief Watts, with augmented feeling, as he drew his deductions to a close. "Cornelius L. Alvord, junior, has had no intention of leaving the country, save that it has been very re-

cently formed. His own acts since the publication of his crime, the testimony of Lawyer Miller, the delay of the bank officers in swearing out a warrant, and their evident desire to effect something yet to be discovered, the frequent conferences between Miller and Mrs. Alvord, the remark of the coachman at Mount Vernon, the testimony of friends and of persons who are said to have seen Alvord—every particle of this evidence declares on the face of it, not that the defaulter has fled the country, but that he is concealed somewhere within a reasonable distance of New York, and actuated in delaying arrest by motives best known to his wife, his attorney, and to Alvord himself!"

It was an effective argument, not alone because of astute analysis and logical deductions, but also because of the dramatic force with which the conclusion had been drawn. Although he was not a man easily moved to excitement, Detective John Tinker sprang impulsively to his feet, his face flushed, his eyes flashing.

"By Jove, Watts, you amaze me!" he exclaimed, with an irrepressible outburst of familiarity and frankness. "You're a marvel, and your perception is wonderful!"

"Not so!" cried Chief Watts, rising. "This case has features that speak for themselves, and in no uncertain tones."

"You are right, sir!"

"I am convinced that a soul of truth is contained in my deductions. I am satisfied that Alvord has not fled the country. I firmly believe that the statements of some of these informants are true—and why not, then, that of Henry M. Alexander?"

"In that case, chief?"

"In that case, Detective Keene, we must move sharper than any gang of friends or confederates by whom Alvord may be surrounded and influenced!" cried Chief Watts forcibly. "If Alvord has been in Boston, the trail should be hot and our course plain! Come, gentlemen, we will visit the Touraine!"

CHAPTER IX.

BYRON STEERLING, NEW YORK.

Again the cabman's carriage rolled noisily over the pavements of the city streets and through the mists of approaching midnight; and in addition to its former occupants, it now contained the man whose clear foresight and indefatigable efforts were destined to be crowned with a veritable triumph of detective art.

The ride was not a long one, and presently Sheridan Keene leaned from the window and called sharply:

"To the side door, cabby!"

"All right, sir."

The towering walls of the magnificent new Touraine were already looming up against the dull night sky. Some of its hundred windows were still illumined, despite the late hour, but the greater number were in darkness.

The elaborate office, gorgeous with the frescoes and art work of master hands, was brilliantly lighted, however, and a warm glow through the plate windows was shed over sidewalk and street.

The cabman crossed Boylston Street and drew his steaming horses down at the curbing opposite the broad Tremont Street entrance to the hotel.

"Wait for us!" commanded Sheridan Keene, when he alighted.

Chief Watts and the New York officer immediately followed, and together the three men entered the Touraine.

Turning to the left, the chief first led the way to the broad inclosure which comprises the business office, and was at once recognized by the night clerk at the desk.

"Good evening——"

But the chief checked with a quick glance the mention of his name. A few late loungers were about the office, the library still was lighted and occupied, and a party of ladies and men were in the nearer parlor. The entrance of the three officers, although in civilian dress, had already attracted as much attention as Chief Watts cared to create.

"I understand," nodded the clerk, as they approached the counter. "I can guess what you wish, for I had a talk with Mr. Morrissey this morning."

"I want to establish, if possible, the identity of a man who was here," nodded the chief. "You evidently know which man I mean."

"Yes, I do."

"Were you on duty at any time while he was here?"

"I was on duty when he arrived. I imagined at the time he came in on one of the New York trains. It was about half past six."

"Did he register?"

"Yes."

"Show me the name."

The clerk quickly turned the register around, and ran his finger down the page till it reached the signature:

"Byron Steerling, New York."

"Humph!" muttered Chief Watts, then glanced at Detective Tinker. "Do you know Alvord's hand?"

"No, I do not. What's the name?"

"Byron Steerling."

"Very pretty."

"Isn't it? Sounds rather like him! I wish, my friend, that you would give us as precise a description of Mr. Steerling as you are able. This is Detective Tinker, of the New York central office, and a man acquainted with Alvord. Cover every point you can recall of this man Steerling; and presently I want you to summon two or three others of your employees who saw him."

"Won't you step inside the office, chief?"

"I think it will be as well."

Oblivious to the curious gaze of the guests in the rotunda, as well as that of several ladies who had emerged from the nearest parlor and stood in the dining-room corridor, Chief Watts, with habitual dignity, led the way into the inclosure.

The interview there, however, was of comparatively brief duration. With the detailed description given by the several employees, aided by sundry inquiries on his own part, Detective Tinker soon had assured himself that Alvord, the defaulter, and the stranger, who two days previous had registered as Byron Steerling, New York, were one and the same man.

"I am reasonably certain of the fact, Chief Watts," the New York officer declared, as the three men left the Touraine and returned to the waiting carriage. "I am fairly without a doubt that Alvord was at this house no longer ago than yesterday noon."

"I believe so, too!" said Chief Watts, as the carriage wheeled to return to Pemberton Square. "And I now

am further satisfied that Alvord still is here in the city, or at least not more remote than one of the suburbs."

"Surely, chief!" exclaimed Sheridan Keene. "With the publicity given him to-day, he could not have ventured far without observation, and some informer would have turned up. Five thousand dollars are not to be gathered from every bush."

"Nor every defaulter," laughed Detective Tinker, thus far well satisfied with the success of his hurried journey.

"You are right. Alvord, moreover, is a man of too prominent a type to travel far without attracting attention, and he well knows it," Chief Watts resumed. "He knows, too, that the Boston police are on the watch for him, and what it would cost him to venture in sight of a bluecoat."

"What are your plans, chief, may I ask?" inquired Detective Tinker.

"To keep our discovery secret and go quietly to work. That is why I cautioned you against betraying at the Touraine the conclusions at which we arrived. I shall impart the facts to my inspectors only."

"A wise step, chief! But how about Captain McClusky?"

"Naturally, I shall communicate the facts to him, requesting his discretion and assistance," Chief Watts replied. "I shall ask him to instruct you to remain in Boston, pending developments, and to identify Alvord, in event of his arrest."

"He will consent to that, I am sure."

"And to-morrow, Chief Watts?"

"We will take up the search anew. I will, if necessary, press into service every officer on the force. I will have every suburb constantly watched. I will leave no stone unturned, no house within Boston's limits—ah, here we are at headquarters! Will you come in again, Detective Tinker?"

"Well, I hardly know, chief," the other briefly demurred. "If there is nothing special until morning, I think I'll snatch a wink of sleep. Otherwise, command me."

"No; no; get some rest, by all means," gravely rejoined Chief Watts, with a warm handshake. "You already have done us a valuable service, and I thank you. Detective Keene!"

"Yes, chief!" and the young officer sprang nearer.

"Take our friend under your wing and entertain him royally. I regret, John, that my own duties deprive me of the privilege."

"Not a word, Chief Watts! Don't speak of it."

"I have several letters to write, and then wish to probe this case a little deeper. Hence must bid you both good night. Report early to-morrow morning, Detective Keene!" he added significantly.

No later than the very next morning there came reports which, if verified, would have crumbled to the dust the entire edifice of Chief Watts' subtle deductions—reports which would have been like a wet blanket upon the energy of most men, and have affected, perhaps fatally, the convictions which else might have led to success.

"Have you seen the morning papers?" he asked of Sheridan Keene, when the latter reported soon after seven o'clock.

"No, I have not, chief. Anything important in them?" Keene quickly inquired.

"It is reported that Alvord was seen in Mount Vernon the night before last."

"Impossible!"

"Surely so, if my theories have feet to stand upon."

"Who makes the statement?"

"One Patrick J. Ring. He owns the People's Opera House, in Mount Vernon. He reports that while on his way to the opera house last night, after eating his dinner, his attention was drawn to a fashionable closed carriage that was passing him. He states that it contained four men, one of whom was Alvord."

"Does he say that it was in the evening?"

"Yes; but that electric lights are on the corner at which he was standing at the time. He states that he plainly saw Alvord through the carriage window; that he knows him well, and is absolutely sure it was he. Ring was so surprised, moreover, that he crossed the street and asked an acquaintance, a man named Weber, if he had noticed the carriage."

"Had he noticed it?"

"Weber replied that he had, and further remarked that one of the men was Alvord. So both appear to have noticed him. Ring was so impressed that he called to see Chief of Police Foley, to tell him what he had seen; but the latter is now in Boston. He then hunted up Commissioner Dewitt, who gave the statements to the reporters."

"Do you know about what time the carriage was seen, Chief Watts?"

"Between six and seven in the evening."

"If the statement is true, Alvord could not possibly have been at the Touraine, nor in Boston, on the afternoon of that day."

"Surely not!"

"What do you think of the report?"

"I think the men are honest, but that both were mistaken," was the immediate reply. "It is very easy to mistake a man in the imperfect light of evening, and particularly under the conditions Ring described. They were very likely deceived by a personal resemblance. I shall hold to my belief that Alvord was in Boston that afternoon, and is still somewhere in this locality."

Having thus implied that his faith in his own deductions was not to be shaken, Chief Watts glanced over a tablet of memoranda made the night before.

"There is a side of this affair to which I now wish to call your attention, Detective Keene," he said, with grave earnestness. "For that reason I asked you to report early this morning."

"I inferred that you might have special work for me, Chief Watts."

"So I have. It concerns the relations which may exist between Alvord and the man you saw leave Mount Vernon with him last Friday night. When you reported that circumstance to me, I said that if you could locate that man, you would find Alvord also. It is a poor rule that will not work both ways."

"It would seem so, Chief Watts, surely."

"Yet there is some mystery here that I find difficult to explain. I feel very sure that Alvord was at the Touraine day before yesterday, as stated. Yet I cannot learn that he had intercourse with any strangers, and he certainly appeared to have no companion. It is very possible that the man who left Mount Vernon with him

did not accompany him to Boston; yet I somehow cleave to my first belief—that they came here in company."

"Do you think they have some interests in common?"

"That is my belief. Otherwise this stranger would hardly become an accessory in such an affair, knowing that Alvord's guilt is already established."

"That is a point well noted, sir," said Keene quickly.

"If, then, they have a mutual interest," Chief Watts earnestly continued; "it is odds that they have not permanently separated, despite that Alvord was alone at the Touraine. It may be that the other was engaged in securing a safe concealment for the defaulter, while Alvord waited in the Touraine, thinking he would be least likely to encounter an officer or attract attention in a hotel of that kind. His sudden disappearance, moreover, indicates that quarters were obtained for him by some person outside."

"That, chief, is also very true."

"The special work I now want you to undertake, Detective Keene, is that of finding the stranger you saw with Alvord," Chief Watts explained. "You are familiar with his features, hence the work naturally falls upon you."

"I am very willing to undertake it, chief," said Sheridan Keene readily. "Have you any suggestion to offer?"

"One only. If you locate the man, do not give him occasion for alarm. Shadow him constantly, till you can learn whether he is in communication with Alvord, either directly or through a third person. Should you locate Alvord, you will know what to do."

"Assuredly!" said Keene, smiling.

"That is all, then."

The young man bowed, turned on his heel, and went out through the corridor and thence to Pemberton Square.

Boston is a tolerably large city. To locate in such a community a stranger from New York, whose name even was not known, is an undertaking that would stagger if not daunt the hearts of most men.

For a moment it staggered even Sheridan Keene. But it did not daunt him.

That evening he reported to Chief Watts at headquarters that his search that day had been futile. He was instructed to continue it.

On Saturday evening he made the same report—and received the same instructions.

He left the headquarters building with his perseverance unshaken.

As he crossed Pemberton Square, he noticed a man standing near the grim wall of the new courthouse, his features plainly revealed in the glare from a near electric light, and his gaze intently turned toward the lighted windows of Chief Watts' private office.

Sheridan Keene felt his blood move faster.

Yet the stranger was not James Greenleaf.

But he was the man with whom Keene had seen James Greenleaf talking, in the gallery of the New York Stock Exchange.

The man named Haskins.

CHAPTER X.

RUNNING DOWN SIDE ISSUES.

For nearly half an hour Haskins continued watching the offices of the inspectors of police; and, for the same duration, Sheridan Keene continued watching Haskins. For the interest of the latter in this quarter, and the persistence with which it was maintained, soon assured the detective that a promising clew had finally been struck, and that Haskins now was probably associated with Greenleaf in Boston.

Through the one, Sheridan Keene now hoped to run down the other. Not for a moment did he lose sight of Haskins, nor even take a chance thereof by hurriedly reporting at headquarters.

It was nearly eight o'clock before Haskins left his position, and the detective followed him. By the way of Beacon and Park Streets he gained the subway, and there boarded an uptown car. Sheridan Keene occupied the rear platform. At a quarter after eight Haskins entered a reputable boarding house in one of the best avenues of the city; and five minutes later Detective Keene applied at the basement door, and presented a request for an interview with the landlady.

The latter responded, coming down to the dining room, and expressing much surprise that a gentleman should have selected the lower door, instead of ringing at that surmounting the lofty flight of brownstone steps.

Yet Detective Keene had already made his way into the dining room.

"There is a reason for my conduct, madam," he said, closing the door by which she had entered the room. "I will explain to your perfect satisfaction."

"I hope so, sir," the lady answered, regarding him doubtfully; and remaining standing.

But Sheridan Keene had a taking way, and he soon favorably impressed her, even while he astonished her.

"I did not wish to question you in your parlor, madam, lest I should be observed or possibly overheard," he explained. "Have you lately received any new boarders here?"

"Yes, sir, I have. Only two or three days ago."

"Gentleman?"

"Yes, sir."

"More than one?"

"I should say so, sir! No less than four, who now occupy my double front rooms over the parlor. But why do you ask me these questions?"

"Because I am an inspector of police, and I suspect—pray, don't be alarmed, madam! I assure you, to begin with, that your house is known to be above reproach, and that any unpleasant incident occasioned by my duties here shall have absolutely no publicity. That is, madam, provided I have your coöperation, rather than if compelled to act against your wishes."

"What is the trouble?" asked the woman, now reassured. "Have I admitted doubtful characters?"

"I suspect that is the case, and I wish to make sure," Keene replied. "You say there are four men?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did they come in company?"

"No sir. The rooms were engaged last Wednesday afternoon, by a man named Greenleaf."

"What kind of a looking man, please?"

"A stout man, with a smooth face and small eyes——"

"That will answer, thank you! I suspected as much. When did his companions arrive?"

"One came the next evening, sir; and the other two the following morning."

"Is there among them a very large man, full featured, with a small, brown mustache——"

"You are describing Alvord, the defaulter!" the woman exclaimed quickly. "I've seen his description in the papers."

"True!" said Keene, smiling. "Is he here?"

"No, sir; I wish he was!" and now the woman laughed significantly. "One can put up with a little annoyance for five thousand dollars."

The detective smiled and nodded.

"I am sorry also," said he. "But I suspect that your new boarders are in some way associated with Alvord, and may be informed of his movements."

"I hardly think so, sir. They have no mail, and one or two of them are out much of the time, as if on business."

"At all events, madam," said Keene; "I wish to watch them for a time. It probably will not be long, and you shall suffer no inconvenience. Haven't you a room I can occupy for a few days, as if I were a boarder here?"

And Sheridan Keene now displayed his credentials and badge.

"Well, sir, there is a small back room on the same floor with that occupied by these men," the woman admitted, rather reluctantly. "I suppose you can have that, sir; but I hope this state of affairs will not last long. I shall not only be very nervous, but the reputation of my house may suffer."

"If you say and do nothing unusual, but leave the matter entirely to me, madam, I think I safely can assure you that there will be no disturbance, and that the actual facts will never be known."

"In that case, sir, you may have the room."

"On what floor is it, please?"

"Two flights up; one above the first hall."

"Is the door locked?"

"No, sir. I will show you the way, if——"

"Pardon! I prefer to go alone—as if my advent here were not recent. Kindly say nothing to these men, or to your help; but leave the matter entirely to me."

He gave her in addition other cautionary advice, and having further informed himself concerning the customs of the house, presently went up alone to the room given him. The halls were vacant through which he passed, and he noticed that the house was well furnished.

He easily located the room assigned to him, and noticed, ere entering his, that the door of what evidently was a commodious front room was closed. Yet above the silence in the hall, he could hear the sound of men's voices in animated conversation, if not even dispute.

Sheridan Keene immediately decided it was a circumstance of which he should take advantage. He glanced over the stairs, then stole to the closed door and listened. The first words that reached his ear told him he had run down the men interested with Alvord.

"There is no sense in searching longer for him, Jim, of that I am sure! The man has jumped the country, and we may as well go back to New York, or light out ourselves if you think he'll be caught. Even the inspectors have no clews to work on. I've been watching the chief's office for an hour, and there's no sign of activity there."

"The activity of the inspectors is all on the outside," retorted Greenleaf, in surly tones.

"If you had been half as active as an inspector, Greenleaf," growled another, "he wouldn't have given you the slip the moment you landed in Boston in the same train with him. That was the lamest thing of all! Knowing as well as you did that he wasn't inclined to cut away for good and all, you should have kept your eye on him constantly, till he had been forced to go."

"Well, that's neither here nor there, and what's the use of constantly flinging that at me," cried Greenleaf angrily. "The man escaped me, and that's all there is to it."

"I wish that were all of the whole affair."

"Well, it isn't!" Greenleaf cried curtly. "The man must be found; and found by us, before Chief Watts can lay hands on him! If he is caught, he will tell all. He must be gotten out of the country. If it is known how we jobbed him in Saratoga, and how he has blown his money into Wall Street, and through whom, Alvord is not the only one who will suffer for it, I say——"

"Shut up! You're speaking too loud! If a person were in the hall, your own words would be enough to convict you! Particularly with your reputation!"

There was the sound of a step approaching the door. Keene moved like a flash, and sought the back room; and though later he ventured forth, his further efforts that night were fruitless.

But he had heard enough to serve his present purpose, and to explain the features which had mystified Chief Watts. It was plain that Greenleaf, with interests too serious to be made public, had followed Alvord to Boston, only to lose him after their arrival. It was plain, too, that this race-track gambler and his companions had committed themselves in their relations with Alvord, and that both their own safety, and perhaps that of men into whose hands Alvord's gigantic theft had willingly been received, depended upon the defaulter's flight and permanent disappearance.

That he now had them well cornered, and felt sure that Chief Watts would ultimately evoke the truth and bring them to justice, was enough for Sheridan Keene. And he settled himself to keep them under surveillance until next morning.

TO BE CONTINUED.

A TRAMP WITH A TRAPPER.

By F. LESLIE.

Some years ago, I visited Independence, with the intention of taking a year or two's pleasure and exercise upon the plains of the Far West. While there, I fell in with one Bill Smith, a famous trapper, who regaled me with the following story:

"It was three years ago," said Bill, "when me and Joe Trace started up the same stream, on a trappin' expedition. Just above here, about fifty miles, the stream forks. When we cum to the forks we proposed to separate, and one to take up each fork until one of us found a good chance of beaver, when we were to notify each other, and both join together again. Waal, we parted; I tuk the north, and Joe the south branch. I traveled upstream all day without seeing any chance of beaver; that night I slept on the banks of the river, without fire, as I knew the reds were out and numerous; the next mornin' I tramped again, but did not cum across anything until near noon, when I saw signs of beaver. I kept away from the banks, and, as the banks of the stream was timbered with big trees and underbrush, I crept along purty well, and, cuming

down to the bank, I saw a big beaver dam, and from the number of huts I knowed there was a right smart chance of beaver. I knowed I cudn't miss the place, and I struck across to hunt up Joe, but before I left I marked two or three trees with my hatchet, which was the signal agreed on between us to let Joe know that I was lookin' for him, if he should happen to be lookin' for me. Waal, I found Joe the next day goin' up the river. I had struck the stream above him, and we now tuk across to the dam and got thar the next day at sundown. We sot our traps, and thar was a beaver in every one the next mornin'. We tuk them out and skinned them, and sot them again. We had good luck, and in three weeks had cleaned them out, almost. Some days we would take a hunt together, but generally one of us stayed in camp. One day I left Joe in camp, and started across the country a-foot, to take a hunt, as we were out of meat. I cum across some deer tracks about a mile from camp. I followed them, and shot one, a big buck, wounding him bad. He ran for the stream, when, arter loadin', I started for him. I knowed he cudn't run far, and cum across him just as he jumped down the bank and tuck to the water. I shot him before he got twenty feet from the bank. I thought I would let myself down by the bushes and roots. I caught hold of them, and let myself down; when about halfway, my feet touched something which I found out was a rock sticking out of the bank. I let my feet rest on it, and, seeing it would bear me, let go of the bushes. Stoopin' down to catch hold of the rock to let myself down, I saw that it run along a good piece, but was overgrown with bushes and moss, I walked along it for twenty feet, when I found that instead of its going down, it ended at the mouth of a cave. I entered it, and found that it was large enough for three or four persons to stay in, while the mouth was so small that but one could enter at a time. 'This will be a fust-rate place to dodge the reds in,' thinks I; and sure enough it was, for that night Joe and I were attacked and had to run for it. I told Joe to foller me. I struck out for the hole. When I cum to the bank, Joe wanted to know what I was goin' to do. I told him to let himself down by his hands, but not to break the bushes, and cum down where I was. I then took him to the cave; Joe opened his eyes, and asked me how I found it out. I told him.

"'This is the very place,' said he, 'if we only had something to eat here.' I pointed to the hams of a deer, laying upon a rock. I had skinned the deer, and placed the most of it in the cave, thinking that we might want to use it, and not caring to carry it back to camp. We could hear the reds yelling like devils over our heads and along the bank; but they were fooled for once. They couldn't make anything of it; they tried to track us the next morning, but it had rained that night, and the tracks were all washed out. We stayed in all next day, but the next mornin' I told Joe I would take a look out for our furs and traps. Our furs we had hid, and they were safe; but our traps and horses were gone. We gathered our furs and struck out fur Independence, with what we could carry. The day after we were attacked by the reds, and Joe was killed, or taken prisoner, and more'n likely killed, as the Pawnees don't like many prisoners, anyhow. I knocked one of 'em over and run for it; they after me, like a pack of devils. But my legs were too good for them, and, after killing two more, I got away and arrived safe at the fort. I got a horse, and took a couple of men, and went back and got the furs, but we could not find Joe. He must have been carried off by the wolves or b'ars, as there were plenty of tracks. Poor Joe, he has gone under, but I have sent many a red to his huntin' ground for that lick."

A DUEL WITH LARIATS.

A strange duel happened in Argentine a few years ago. Two ranchers were enamored of the same dark-eyed señorita. Now, when your South American is hit by the blind archer, he is hit hard. He is not satisfied to visit his charmer one evening in the week, and give up the rest of the time to his rivals. If he catches another admirer hanging about the house of his inamorata, there is apt to be trouble and work for the priest and undertaker.

The two sighing swains in question had agreed to settle, by a duel with the lasso, which should wed the damsel. A hundred piratical-looking cow-punches assembled to witness the fray. The rivals appeared mounted on mettlesome mustangs, each with a long, powerful lariat of tough bull hide.

They were both experts with the lasso, and their horsemanship was a marvel. They approached to within forty or fifty yards of each other, then began to maneuver for a deciding cast. After several feints the lariat of the younger of the rivals went whizzing through the air so swiftly that the eye could scarcely follow it. The other sunk his spurs into his mustang.

The animal shot forward just in time to save his master from the deadly noose, and, as he did so, the second lasso rose into the air and settled round the shoulders of the man who missed, pinning his arms to his side as in a vice. He was jerked headlong out of his saddle.

His successful rival drew him along, hand over hand, half lifted him from the ground by the tenacious thong, and put a bullet squarely between his eyes. He then turned and rode directly to the hacienda, where lived the cause of this barbaric scene. She mounted behind him, and he came galloping back, swinging his sombrero.

POPULAR MEDICINE.

In Saxony nobody ventures to wipe the fingers on the tablecloth, lest the hands become covered with warts.

Throughout Germany brooms play a large part in the tragi-comedy of popular medicines, since they are the witches' favorite means of conveyance to their nightly feast at Blocksberg.

In Westphalia—that lumber room of superstition—and Saxony, the unfortunate mortals who happen to have been beaten with a broomstick firmly believe themselves doomed to die of consumption, and small children who have been chastised by means of a hazel or willow rod are supposed either to be crippled or stunted in their growth.

Some usages are of a droll character, such as kissing a donkey, which remedy is prescribed for a toothache.

Those who suffer from jaundice are enjoined merely to look intently into a barrel of tar, if they wish to get rid of the complaint.

Gout is annihilated by potatoes—simple raw potatoes—which, however, must needs be the produce of a begging expedition, and must be carried about suspended from the invalid's body until they are quite shriveled and dried up.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Memory Returns After Fifteen Years.

Professor Mark Walrod Harrington, former member of the faculty of the University of Michigan and for four years director of the United States weather bureau at Washington, whose disappearance fifteen years ago and subsequent reappearance minus his memory attracted widespread attention, is living in retirement at Lanesdale, Pa., according to a letter received at Detroit, Mich., by a friend.

Few of his Detroit friends knew that he was still alive. The letter, written by the professor's wife, says his memory is improving. His disappearance is thought to have been due to a stroke of lightning.

Born at Sycamore, Ill., in 1848, he was educated at Evanston, Ill., and graduated from the University of Michigan. In 1881, he became director of the United States weather bureau. In 1897, he retired to private life after two years as president of the Washington State University.

Then came his disappearance. The countrywide search made by his wife and the authorities was fruitless until a man who was identified by Mrs. Harrington as her husband, was located in a sanitarium in New Jersey. He remembered nothing of his past.

Professor Harrington is the author of numerous scientific articles.

Colonial League Organized.

The Colonial Baseball League, to embrace five cities and one town in southern New England, has been organized. The clubs will be located at Woonsocket and Newport, R. I., and Brockton, Fall River, New Bedford and Attleboro Mass. Charles B. Coppen, of Providence, was elected president and was authorized to make application to the National Association for protection as a Class-C league.

Ear Mark Frees Twins.

A tiny notch in his left ear freed Joseph Sullivan, whom Sheriff Oberlin detained as John Sullivan, wanted in connection with freight-car robberies, at Canton, Ohio.

It was only by examination of Sullivan's ear that Bertillon Expert George Koestle, of the Cleveland police department, was able to testify that the prisoner was not John, but his twin brother.

Breaks Own Record by Accident.

By accident, Lincoln Beachey, the aviator, recently broke his own world's record of "looping the loop." His former best performance consisted of seven loops. This time Beachey turned his machine over no less than twelve times.

In a new machine, one he had never tested, he found himself powerless to stop the revolutions. He was at a height of 2,000 feet when he made his first loop. The biplane then pointed its nose toward the earth and made a spiral dip. Beachey had lost control. Turning and twisting into every conceivable position, the fall continued. Few realized that anything was wrong, and the aviator was finally able to steer the machine into a tree. The craft was wrecked, but he escaped with a few scratches. It was a close call from death, his striking the tree having averted a crash into the crowd of 5,000 watchers, at Ranch Park, Santa Barbara, Cal.

Live Sporting Notes.

An all-star baseball team picked by a vote taken from one sporting writer in each major-league city, consists of the following players: Catcher, Archer, Chicago Nationals; pitchers, Johnson, Washington Americans, and Rucker, Brooklyn Nationals; first baseman, Daubert, Brooklyn Nationals; second baseman, Collins, Philadelphia Americans; third baseman, Baker, Philadelphia Americans; shortstop, Barry, Philadelphia Americans; right fielder, Jackson, Cleveland Americans; center fielder, Cobb, Detroit Americans; left fielder, Oldring, Philadelphia Athletics.

Fifty baseballs were used in the game played before King George in England by the Giants and White Sox teams. So many balls were given away before the game started, and were lost in the crowd during the contest, that McGraw and Callahan were compelled to ask the return of some of the "horse hides" that they had presented to friends, in order to keep the game going.

Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has set the pace for minor-league ball clubs by paying an income tax of $61. The total attendance last year was 72,000 paid admissions. This is more than attend the games in some of the larger cities.

Although the referee gave Jim Flynn, of Pueblo, a draw with Jack Dillon, at Kansas City, the decision was unpopular, and was assailed by the fans and newspapers, who thought Dillon had won easily.

Pitcher Tincup, an Indian, is being coached to succeed Tom Seaton on the hurling staff of the Philadelphia Nationals. Seaton jumped to the Brooklyn Federals.

The Milwaukee boxing commission has decided that the ban on Packey McFarland will stand. McFarland was suspended for loafing in a bout with Jack Britton in Milwaukee.

Edgar Willett, the veteran Detroit pitcher, who jumped to the St. Louis Federals, is anxious to return to his old club, it is said, but Detroit won't have him.

New York is fight mad. As many as 100 bouts are held in that city each week, and all of them are well attended, as a rule.

Clyde Milan has signed his contract to play with the Washington team. He has been the champion base stealer of the country for two seasons.

"Snowy" Baker, an Australian fight promoter, who is in America to procure boxers for fights in his country, does not understand what use a fighter has for a manager. He has never had to deal with them in Australia except when American fighters went there.

Johnny Dundee, the New York lightweight, probably will go to England for several battles. He has received some enticing offers.

James, a pitcher being tried out with the St. Louis Americans, is said to have more speed than any other twirler, except Walter Johnson, of course.

Catcher Ira Thomas has been named to succeed Dan

Murphy as captain of the Philadelphia Athletics. Murphy has been sold to Baltimore.

Bombardier Wells, British heavyweight, knocked out Bandsman Blake in the fourth round at London. Blake is a middleweight.

Frank Moran, of Cleveland, the American heavyweight, who is matched to meet Jack Johnson in June, will appear in vaudeville in this country before beginning active training for the bout.

The Pennsylvania and West Virginia Baseball League, a Class D organization, has been formed to replace the defunct Ohio and Pennsylvania League.

It is probable that the Chicago White Sox will start the 1914 season with the same team as last spring.

Tickets Printed to Order.

Ready-made railroad tickets may soon go out of use. A machine recently invented prints and stamps tickets before the very eyes of the purchasers, at the same time keeping a running total of all sales, and leaving with the seller precise duplicates of all tickets sold. One of these machines now in use prints any one of 400 kinds of tickets, at a cost of about one five-hundredth of a cent each.

Wagers He Won't Die; Loses.

Bernard C. Stiles, a former saloonkeeper and gambler, was shot five times in a soft-drink saloon at Memphis, Tenn., by John J. McMahon, city fireman, as the result of a quarrel following a game of dice, it is charged. When undergoing an examination by physicians, Stiles offered to wager that he would not die. Less than half an hour later he was dead.

Adopts Child; Now Has 300.

When Helen Sherman, a waif, in charge of the Wisconsin Industrial School, at Milwaukee, Wis., heard of the name of Charles Page, she remarked that he was her uncle. An investigation disclosed the fact that Page, who is a millionaire of Tulsa, Okla., was related to her. He adopted the child, she being the three-hundredth waif he has taken charge of. He declares he will adopt 1,000 children.

Horse a Good Detective.

By loading a wagon at an illicit oleomargarine factory and allowing the horse to travel without guidance for a distance of two miles to the Union Market, where it backed the wagon up to the stall of Walter R. Morris, owner of a creamery stall, at St. Louis, Mo., detectives claim they found a large quantity of "oleo" on which no government tax had been paid. Morris was arrested.

World Tour Successful.

On the world's tour of the Giants and White Sox, which came to an end at London on February 26, so far as competitive baseball is concerned, the American Leaguers return home winners of a majority of the fifty games played.

Since the tour began at Cincinnati, forty-six games have been played between the globe-touring teams and four with native teams in Japan and Australia. The Sox won twenty-four games, McGraw's men won twenty, and two ended in ties at Los Angeles on November 9, and at Cairo on February 1. In the games against native teams, the Giants won their two games, the White Sox won one, and a combination of players from both teams won the other.

Financially, the tour has exceeded the expectations of the promoters. It was announced when first arranged, that an even break would be considered satisfactory, but the games in the United States brought almost $100,000 at the gate. The announcement has been made that the receipts were almost $75,000 above the expenses.

Panthers Runs Wild in Ohio.

Led by Detective Eli Boersteler, of the Barberton, Ohio, police force, a posse left Barberton to hunt the hills near Pebble Rock for a panther reported to have been seen by C. H. Morehead, Pennsylvania Railroad night dispatcher. The last two weeks many workmen going back and forth along the tracks reported seeing tracks of large animals.

Russell Ford's Case.

When Russell Ford jumped the Yankees and signed with the Feds, he received $5,000—one year's salary—in advance from President Gilmore. It was learned that this money was supplied by Weeghman, the Chicago Feds' backer, but the latter now says that the Buffalo Feds, to whom Ford has been assigned, will have to return the coin to him. Ford knew what he was doing when he took the leap. Last year he drew a salary of $5,500 from President Farrell, of the Yankees. After pitching inferior ball, Chance called Ford aside in September and is alleged to have said:

"If I don't accomplish anything else this year, I'll prevent you from getting more than $2,500 next season, and if I can trade you I'll do it."

Ford knew that the jig was up when he finished his campaign in New York. Hence the flop that netted $5,000 in sure money for the coming season.

Wants 20,000 Young Farmers.

The Kansas Agricultural College has hired Miss Emma Skinner to assist in its campaign to get 20,000 Kansas boys and girls in agricultural and home-making contests this year. She will urge boys and girls to compete in the growing of vegetable gardens and flower gardens, and in village improvements contests. She also will help to organize contests in baking, canning and sewing.

Enos a Federal Head.

Laurens Enos, former head of the Buffalo and New York State automobile clubs, and a famous sportsman, will probably be the head of the Buffalo Federal League club as its president. The fact that the honor has been offered Mr. Enos was admitted by him. He has the matter under consideration, and will probably accept. Incidentally, Mr. Enos, who is a stockholder in the Federal enterprise, took advantage of the opportunity to declare that he believes that Buffalo is eager to welcome the third leaguers to town, and that he is confident that such a fine article of major-league ball will be furnished that Buffalo will never be sorry for the part it will play in the birth of the latest circuit.

Measures His Money as Farmer Would Oats.

Benjamin Bonham, a storekeeper of Bridgeton, N. J., has the unusual hobby of collecting pennies. Not only does he procure all of them he can, but he often uses them in

returning change to customers. He paid one bill of $44 in pennies, and the persons who sought to buy postage stamps or small articles for the sake of getting a ten-dollar bill cashed were often peeved by receiving their change in a paper bag—all pennies.

Bonham measures his money as a farmer would oats—by the bushel. He declares he has a bushel of one-cent coins, and says there are exactly 53,042 of them. He counted them himself, and enjoyed the experience.

Pirates Get $30,000 Loot.

Pirates recently boarded and looted the Norwegian steamer *Childar*, of Hongkong, carrying off booty to the value of $30,000 after overpowering, binding, and gagging the six Europeans on board.

The steamer was carrying fifty native passengers, and, as she was lying outside, the armed desperadoes sprang over the bulwarks, seized the officers, and began their search for loot. The interior of the vessel was badly damaged by the band before they disappeared over the sides and escaped up the river in junks.

The pirates wore pieces of white cotton as badges something like those carried by the revolutionaries in the recent rebellion. The badges bore in Chinese character the words, "Money Comes Easily."

Trains Kills Sweetheart.

While trying to save the life of Miss Dixie Blackburn, his sweetheart, whose foot was caught in a railway trestle near Williamson, W. Va., William McCoy was struck by a train and tossed into a ravine fifty feet away. Miss Blackburn was instantly killed, and McCoy was dying when picked up.

President's Daughter to Marry.

Miss Eleanor Wilson, youngest daughter of the president, is engaged to marry William Gibbs McAdoo, secretary of the treasury. The wedding will take place this spring.

Can Divide His Attention.

Sewall Maddock, a cashier of a Boothbay, Maine, bank, is a mathematical genius, or, perhaps, it would be better to say that he has a double-barreled brain. Using both hands, he can write out separate bills, or add up two columns of figures at the same time.

Farm Hand Leaves Million.

William Dulaney, who started life as a farm hand at 25 cents a day, died at Hannibal, Mo., leaving an estate valued at $1,000,000. He was 96 years old. He was noted as a philanthropist, having given several poor girls a college education.

Coal Field's Big Yield.

Excavations equal to the entire amount necessary to build the Panama Canal have been made in the anthracite coal fields of Pennsylvania every year since the Panama Canal was begun. The average number of net tons of coal produced from the anthracite mines during the years 1904 to 1913, inclusive, was approximately 81,000,000. Each long ton of this coal measured at least one cubic yard in the vein. A long ton of 2,240 pounds is over 10 per cent more than a net ton of 2,000 pounds.

The tonnage of coal, therefore, accounts for at least 90,000,000 of the 195,323,000 cubic yards of excavation originally necessary for the Panama Canal. Add to this the fact that more rock and refuse than coal is hoisted out of the anthracite mines, and this accounts for another 100,000,000 cubic yards. Finally, the gigantic strippings estimated by one contractor at 12,000,000 cubic yards a year, and the miles of drainage tunnels cut through the solid rock easily bring up the total annual cubic yardage of excavation to a total equal to, if not greater than, the total yardage of the Panama Canal.

It should be remembered, in addition to this, that the Panama Canal is being dug in the open sunlight, while the vast majority of the work in Pennsylvania is done in dark, narrow passages far below ground, and the material has to be transported 300 to 3,000 feet. The thicker veins are being rapidly exhausted, and the proportion of rock and refuse to the amount of coal hoisted is increasing steadily year by year as the narrower veins are worked. If the companies are able to maintain the present rate of production of coal, the annual amount of excavation will far exceed the Panama Canal in the next few years.

Woman Would Join United States Navy.

A woman wants to join the United States navy. The following letters was received at the naval recruiting station at Kansas City: "Please send us your catalogue. My husband and I want to join the navy. He wants to be a sailor, and I want to enter the Red Cross department."

King Applauds Boxers.

King George was an interested spectator of some exciting boxing bouts recently, when he attended the gymnastic display at the barracks of the Second Life Guards, in London. His majesty, who smoked cigarettes, followed each bout very closely, heartily applauding every good piece of work, and laughing at many amusing incidents.

The great event of the evening was three exhibition rounds between Bombardier Wells, the heavyweight champion of England, and Pat O'Keefe, the middleweight champion. His majesty fixed his eyes on Wells and never moved them while the popular boxer was in the ring, frequently showing appreciation of his cleverness by applause.

Roads Used More than Railways.

While great improvements are being made in the roadways of the United States each year, there are many thousand miles of road which require attention. It has been estimated that while the 250,000 miles of railroads in this country transport several billion tons of freight each year, two or three times that weight has been carried in the year over the two and a quarter million miles of highways. Not many more than 200,000 miles of these roads are "improved," 60,000 in stone, 103,000 in gravel, and the rest in brick, sand, clay, bituminous macadam, and other material.

Low-score Games Pennant Winners.

Runs usually win pennants, but not always. There are many freaks in baseball. In 1906 the Chicago White Sox were the weakest hitting club in the American League, but they defeated the Chicago Cubs, the hardest-hitting club in the National League, in the world's series. This feat was unique, but the Great Falls team of the Union Association have proved themselves the runless wonders

of the age. In a six-club league they scored less runs than any other team in the circuit, but they won the championship.

Great Falls succeeded in scoring only 612 runs, while Salt Lake City, their closest rivals, scored 856. Salt Lake also led Great Falls in batting by thirty points. The secret of Great Falls' success was their ability to win low-score games. It was this same ability which made such terrors of the White Sox in 1903.

Roosevelt's Long Ride.

Colonel Rondon, a member of the Brazilian commission accompanying Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, telegraphs that the expedition has reached Barao de Malgato after a ride of over 500 miles on horseback through the interior of the country, without being attacked by savages.

The telegram says that Colonel Roosevelt is in excellent health, and adds that he was greatly surprised by the richness of the region traversed.

"Come Back" Worth $69,441.

Six months of his "come-back" experiment have netted Ad Wolgast $69,441, the former lightweight champion announces upon his return from Milwaukee, where he grabbed off $11,941 as his share of the Ritchie bout. The sum Ad will stack alongside about $150,000 he earned in previous ring battles.

"People don't care any more whether you are champion or not," said Ad. "All they want is a run for their money."

Indiana Man Raises Skunks.

Bud Williams, a veteran trapper and hunter of Knox, Ind., is conducting a successful skunk farm. After the country became too thickly settled to allow trapping to pay, Williams caught seevral skunks alive and started his farm.

Winter Kills Wild Animals.

The past winter has been one of the worst in the history of Pennsylvania on both game and domestic animals. Rabbits became so hungry that they would take food from a person's hand, and quail, deer, redbirds, pheasants, crows, and other birds and animals have been frozen and starved to death in large numbers.

Here and There.

Equestrian statues on the battlefield of Gettysburg all follow a general rule which sculptors have adopted. If two feet of the horse are in the air, the rider was killed. If one foot is lifted from the ground the rider was wounded. If all four feet are planted on the base, then it signifies that the subject of the statue was not hurt.

The Canadian Pacific Railroad is said to be the largest landowner in the world. Despite the sale of millions of acres from the original grant of approximately 26,700,000 acres, the railroad still possessed at the opening of the year more than 11,000,000 acres, worth, on the basis of recent sales, at least $175,000,000.

Brookhaven, Long Island, New York, boasts that it is the richest township in the world. In its three banks farmers have $16,000,000 on deposit. The per capita wealth of the residents, counting every man, woman, and child, is $1,500.

A man between 20 and 30 loses on an average of only five and a half days a year from illness, but between 50 and 60 he loses about twenty days annually.

In the last year, 13,214,316 letters arrived at the dead-letter office, at Washington, D. C., and of these 6,440,944 were returned to the senders.

Minnesota has a forest area of 28,000,000 acres, the largest of any State east of the Rocky Mountains.

It is said that a hair from the tail of a horse is the strongest animal thread known.

Wooden spoons are almost the only kind used by the peasant class of Russia, which forms 77 per cent of the entire population.

Fourteen hundred earth tremors were recorded in various parts of Japan last year.

Most of the familiar licorice root comes from Syria. It is gathered and piled into great sacks, where it remains until it is thoroughly dry. It is then taken to the factory to undergo certain processes. The finished product is used for flavoring confectionery and beer, as well as entering into the make-up of many brands of tobacco.

Ties made of a species of native hard wood have been used on the Panama Railroad without renewal for more than fifty years.

The per capita consumption of horse meat in the German city of Nuremburg last year was slightly more than nine-tenths of a pound.

Keep Dynamite in Bottles.

The expediency of keeping dynamite from freezing, especially when it is being taken from the magazine to the place of use in cold weather, has resulted in the invention of a nonfreezing carrier constructed on the principle of the thermos bottle. When dynamite is placed in the bottles, or tubes, the corks are firmly inserted in the ends, and it will remain unfrozen for at least twelve hours, even when the carrier is exposed to a temperature considerably below zero. Before placing dynamite in the tubes, they are put in a room having a temperature of 65 degrees, or higher, and the corks are withdrawn for at least five minutes.

Popular Science.

Artificial wood, having the resistance of oak, is now successfully made from straw. The straw after being cut into small pieces is reduced to paste by boiling and certain chemicals are added. When the paste has become a mass it is put into presses, and planks, beams, laths, and moldings of all sizes are readily made. This new material can be sawed like natural wood.

The height of Mount Rainier, Washington, has been determined by the United States' geological survey to be 14,408 feet above sea level. This elevation now officially displaces the former supposed height of the mountain, 14,363 feet, and accords to Mount Rainier the distinction of being the second highest peak in the country, Mount Whitney, California, being the first.

Recently formed ice (and on the surface) one and one-half inches thick will support a man; four inches thick will support cavalry; five inches thick will support an eighty-four-pound cannon; ten inches thick will support an army; eighteen inches thick will support a railroad train.

Professor Charles James, head of the department of chemistry of the New Hampshire College, has in his laboratory fifty grams of terbium bromate, worth about $2,000. Besides this, the world's total supply is seven

grams in a laboratory in France. Terbium is one of the rare earths.

The first skyscraper was planned (but not built) by a French architect in the year 1601. It was to be more than 300 feet high, and provide rooms for 500 persons.

Rope-filled horseshoes, which pick up small stones and sand, and present a rough surface, have been invented in Germany for helping horses on slippery streets.

The new automobile headlight is a radical departure from other designs. The lamp has the shape of a human eyeball, and turns in its socket in exactly the same manner as the eye in its support.

From the resinous substance collected by bees from the buds of trees and used by them to stop the crevices in hives, a new antiseptic dressing for wounds is being made.

Although many plants close their leaves and flowers at the approach of rain, lettuce flowers open their widest at such times.

Railroads of the United States annually consume more than two million seven hundred thousand gallons of water for each mile of line.

The street lighting of an Ohio town is controlled by an ordinary alarm clock, to which are attached home-made switching devices.

Imitation smoke, made of properly colored cotton mounted upon wires, has been patented for use in toy locomotives.

That the formation of a human being begins with the stomach is the contention of several scientists of high repute.

One-third of the world's supply of platinum is required in dentistry and another third for electrical purposes.

Gold-filled teeth have been found in the jaws of skeletons exhumed from the ruins of ancient Pompeii.

A water pipe may be bent without buckling if filled with water and a cork driven in each end.

The wild lettuce of the northern United States has possibilities as a source of rubber.

Five Brothers Look Alike.

Salvatore Morman, 16 years old, pleaded not guilty when he was arraigned in the New Jersey Avenue Court, Brooklyn, charged by Mrs. James Dougherty with shoveling snow from his roof to the roof of the Dougherty residence adjoining.

Harry, Louis, George, and Frank, brothers of Salvatore, stood up in court, and Mrs. Dougherty was unable to identify the snow shoveler, so the case was dismissed.

Parcel Post Aid in Selling Eggs.

Evergreen Park, Ill., only a few miles from Chicago, has a poultry club with a membership of fifty-nine boys and girls, who are learning more from it, according to their parents, than from all their studies in school. Professor E. C. Hansen, who has charge of the school, and George E. Farrell, country-life leader of Division No. 1, Cook County, organized the club, which is run in connection with the school work.

No member of the club may have more than twenty-five nor less than five hens. Each is supposed to bring the eggs laid by his hens to the schoolhouse the following morning. Then they are sent to Chicago by parcel post, and are marketed by Edward J. Tobin, county superintendent of schools, who procures the full retail price. At the end of each week the profits are divided among the pupils, the amounts depending on the number of eggs each has contributed. Naturally, this causes a spirit of competition, and makes the pupils pay attention to the lessons in poultry-raising, and instructions in feeding and housing.

Each club member has a number, and is compelled to put this number on the egg, together with the date it was laid. This enables the purchaser to trace the egg in case it is not fresh—something that has not happened so far.

The arithmetic and bookkeeping necessary to maintain a correct account of the business of the club is another feature of practical value to the children. There are fifty-nine individual accounts to be made every day. Once each week the profits per individual must be figured also, both the gross and the net.

The club members also learn the secrets of marketing. They are able to fill orders of any reasonable size, where an individual producer might be unable at times to meet the demands of his customers.

The parents of the children are delighted, and the boys and girls themselves are enthusiastic. So far the eggs have been taken as fast as they are ready for sale because of the guarantee of freshness. It costs 5 cents per dozen to send the eggs by parcel post to Chicago, but in large quantities this cost may be reduced to 3 cents.

Pig Has Human Face in Eye.

Joseph Fleischman, a merchant of Hawkinsville, Ga., is the owner of one of the greatest freaks ever seen in that part of the South. It is a pig which has a human face in its eye, and two noses, one a normal pig's snout, and the other a diminutive elephant's trunk, the latter growing from its forehead. It has no hair on its body. Fleischman bought the pig from a farmer.

Harsh Criticism of Russian Czar.

Whether the late Count Paul Vassili was a valet in the Russian court, or one holding a much higher office, his opinion of the czar could hardly be much lower. His reminiscences are about to be published. Some thirty years ago he wrote a number of letters, dealing with society in various European capitals, and though at the time he was not identified as the author, he may be said to have become anonymously famous. Encouraged by this success, he kept a diary faithfully almost until the day of his death. It deals with men and events from the time of the Crimean War until the present year. Traveling extensively in a royal entourage, he had unusual opportunities for observing and for learning the inside history of matters not usually confided to the public. His experience did not increase his respect for the great world in which he moved, and it is to be feared that much that he has written is inspired by ill nature.

Count Vassili thinks Nicholas II is about the weakest monarch who ever sat upon a throne anywhere. His weakness is not that of good nature. On the contrary, he is vindictive to a degree. It is the weakness of a man who does not know his own mind, who has never trained for the great position he now fills, and who has learned nothing about it that does not seem to affect him personally. On various occasions, stories have been circulated as to the czar's coolness in moments of danger, and his imperturbability in the face of disastrous news. The coolness, according to Vassili, probably arises from stupidity; the sang-froid from selfishness. He was playing tennis when

a telegram was brought to him, telling of the destruction of Russia's fleet at the hands of Togo. He read the message, put it in his pocket, and went on playing his game, not a muscle of his face moving. At his coronation, a catastrophe occurred that cost the lives of nearly 2,000 persons; yet the czar danced nearly the whole of the night following. As Rochefoucauld says, "We bear with the greatest composure the misfortunes that do not concern us."

When a revolution was imminent, the czar did not display his boasted presence of mind. He fled from the threatening danger, and left others to drown the rebellion in blood. Nor did he show any gratitude for the statesman who saved the empire from destruction. Nicholas was in Kieff when Stclypin was shot down by an assassin. His royal master, however, proceeded to the Crimea, not thinking it worth his while to return for the funeral of this statesman. It is said that when M. Kokostov, Stolypin's successor, arrived at Livadia to discuss with his royal master the policy of the ministry, he found the czar engaged in hanging some prints upon the walls. His first words were: "Oh, I am glad that you have arrived. You will tell me whether this picture hangs well or not." The prime minister remained three days, but in that time was unable to get Nicholas to discuss affairs of state. He said that he had come to Livadia for a rest, and that other matters could wait until he returned to St. Petersburg.

With the members of his family the relations of the emperor are like his relations with every one else in the respect that they are subject to sudden and capricious change. The influence of his mother was at one time paramount, and though it is not as strong as when he ascended the throne, yet Vassili was of the opinion that he would never go deliberately against any of her expressed desires. His regard for his wife and children is described by the word "affectionate," but it is explained that for affectionate we must not understand "tender." His wife treats him rather as a bad boy than as the czar of all the Russias, and has failed, in that her sympathy has not developed any good points that might be in his character. The critic, however, does not leave us to suppose that there are any good points. Nevertheless, he unwittingly arouses some sympathy for the czar, who lives a lonely life, without friends except three aids-de-camp who have been with him for twenty years, and whose society he is fond of.

Shows Three Kinds of Time.

With a clock dial invented by a Washington, D. C., man, it is possible to tell twelve-hour, twenty-four hour, and nautical time.

In a new hotel in Worcester, Mass., there will be a clock set in the floor of the lobby. The dial will be of glass one inch thick, and will be twenty-four inches in diameter. The clock will be run by electricity.

His Brain Works in Reverse Order.

Reuben Kalisky, a deputy recorder, of San Francisco, has an uncanny gift of "backward memory," which appears to be even more remarkable than the peculiar locomotion of the dog reported in Los Angeles recently, which walked backward when called, because of a peculiar defect in sight.

With a little coaxing and in the pause of his official duties, Kalisky will amuse his friends with "backward" spelling, and is not to be caught unawares with trick words.

"Rube, what's the name of the King of Servia?"

"Pete, isn't it—or is it Alec? No, Alec's the poor gink they killed."

"Pete's right, but how do you spell his last name? Karageorgeovitch?"

"H-c-t-i-v-o-e-g-r-o-e-g-a-r-a-k," replied Rube promptly and correctly—correctly except that the name was spelled backward.

That is the peculiarity of Kalisky's memory. Remind him of a word, a sentence, even an entire paragraph, that he has once seen, or allow him a moment to glance at words, sentences, or paragraphs with which he has not before been familiar, and he will at once without hitch or hesitation, and always correctly, rattle off in reverse order all the letters used, paying no attention in the case of sentences to the division in words.

An unkind attempt to trip him proved to a recent investigator that Kalisky really has a wonderful mind.

"Try this," said the investigator:

"Mary had a little lamb——"

"B-m-a-l-e-l-t-t-i-l-a-d-a-h-y-r-a-m," rattled off "Rube."

"It's 'fleas' were white as snow," continued the tester.

"They should have been black," said Kalisky, laughing, and, without a second's pause, continued: "W-o-n-s-s-a-e-t-i-h-w-e-r-e-w-s-a-e-l-f s-t-i."

"And everywhere that Mary went——"

"T-n-e-w-y-r-a-m-t-a-h-t-e-r-e-h-w-y-r-e-v-c-d-n-a."

Clever Cat Baits Hungry Squirrels.

"Commodore Nutt," pet cat of Major Cannon, of Governor's Island, New York, has been deported by military order for making the squirrels on the island his favorite diet. He was unfair in his methods of attack. He would roll a peanut near the squirrels, and then lie in wait for a victim.

He was caught in the act and reported. Major Cannon was notified that Commodore Nutt must leave or be provided with a bell. Thenceforth the tricky pet tinkled as he went. But the squirrels continued to die.

A sentry finally saw him creeping toward a chattering little animal. He was creeping on three feet. His left forefoot clutched the bell at his neck. When that bell tinkled again, it sounded the deathknell of another squirrel. That settled tabby. He was brought from the island and cast into the outer darkness, to join the great army of unemployed cats.

Tobacco Habit Easily Conquered

A New Yorker of wide experience, has written a book telling how the tobacco or snuff habit may be easily and completely banished in three days with delightful benefit. The author, Edward J. Woods, 534 Sixth Ave., 230 E New York City, will mail his book free on request.

The health improves wonderfully after the nicotine poison is out of the system. Calmness, tranquil sleep, clear eyes, normal appetite, good digestion, manly vigor, strong memory and a general gain in efficiency are among the many benefits reported. Get rid of that nervous feeling; no more need of pipe, cigar, cigarette, snuff or chewing tobacco to pacify morbid desire.

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759—The Antique Vial.
760—The House of Slumber.
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762—"The Mocker's" Stratagem.
763—The Man that Came Back.
764—The Tracks in the Snow.
765—The Babbington Case.
766—The Masters of Millions.
767—The Blue Stain.
768—The Lost Clew.
769—The Midnight Message.
770—The Turn of a Card.
771—A Message in the Dust.
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794—Doctor Quartz's Last Play.
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796—The Lure of Gold.
797—The Man With a Chest.
798—A Shadowed Life.
799—The Secret Agent.
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807—Nick Carter's Advertisement.
808—The Dragon Necklace.
809—The Footprints on the Rug.
810—The Copper Cylinder.
811—Nick Carter and the Nihilists.
812—Nick Carter and the Convict Gang.
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